

T³

A Stewardship Program

For

The Episcopal Diocese of Montana

Originally created by and for the Episcopal Diocese of Southwest Florida
Updated by the Episcopal Diocese of Montana

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PREFACE

T3 begins with the conviction that Christian Stewardship is a whole life personal management concern. Christian Stewardship is a faith response offered in thanksgiving to God through the local congregation. That faith response includes the ways we manage our time, the talents God has given us, our financial resources and equally important, the ways congregational leadership manage the gifts of time, talent and money entrusted to them by members of the congregation. T3 recognizes the busy calendars and critical events that every Episcopal congregation faces year after year and integrates a series of resources, classes and events that will assist a congregation in developing a faith based response to the Good News of God in Christ Jesus.

T3 is a three-year plan that recognizes that congregational leadership completely changes over a three year period. It recognizes the need to continue Christian Stewardship Education with new leadership and it affirms the long-term nature of faith development. Although the calendar remains largely unchanged for each year, the resources provided for the two major educational components and the materials for publication differ each year.

T3 is not intended to be a quick fix program, nor is it intended to be an appealing ‘gimmie’ designed to collect pledge cards. It will, however, result in significant increased giving to the congregation for its mission and ministry. It will result in greater active participation in that mission and ministry by members of the congregations, and it will invite members of the congregation into a deeper, more meaningful faith experience.

Finally, T3 recognizes that many important terms and symbols long used and powerful, have nevertheless taken on connotations in the congregational setting that have inhibited good stewardship education and faith development. Words such as *Stewardship*, *Tithe* and *Mission Statement* are good terms when well understood. However, many in our congregations have heard those words in the context of guilt, legalism, or “fund-raising”. T3 offers other terms with the hope that a new language will open the doors closed by the abuse of more traditional terms. For instance in place of the word *Stewardship*, we will generally use the word *Management*; for the word *Tithe* we use the *Principles of Priority*

Setting, and for *Mission Statement* we use “*Statement of Unique Ministry*”.

INTRODUCTION

Every good year-round stewardship education program includes the following components:

- A CALENDAR AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE
- A COMMITTED LEADERSHIP TEAM
- A STATEMENT OF UNIQUE MINISTRY
- A STEWARDSHIP STATEMENT
- A NARRATIVE BUDGET
- A COMMUNICATION SYSTEM
- A SCRIPTURAL BASED EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE

A Calendar and Organizational Structure:

Many good stewardship programs fail because there is no carefully prepared schedule of tasks to be accomplished. A well-defined plan will prevent this cause of failure. It is important that each person know what his/her task is, how long she/he must do it, when it is to be completed, and to whom he/she is accountable. An organizational structure indicates the seriousness with which stewardship education is being taken.

A Committed Leadership:

It is a self-evident truth that leaders must lead. The level of commitment of any congregation will rarely rise above that of the leaders.

A Statement of Unique Ministry:

A Statement of Unique Ministry helps give clarity to the purpose of the congregation and what distinguishes it from other Christian congregations in the community. It invites others to participate in the exciting ministries of the congregation and it provides accountability.

A Stewardship Statement:

A Stewardship Statement re-affirms the commitment of the congregation's leadership and sets the standard for faithful management of personal resources.

A Narrative Budget:

If, as faithful stewards, we choose to give to God through our congregation, then we will want to be assured that our congregation is doing God’s work. We need concrete, specific descriptions of the ways our money, time and talent are used. A narrative budget describes, in prose, not dollars, ministries of the congregation and priorities among them.

A Communications System:

Many professional communicators tell us that unless we hear something at least twelve times we simply will not hear it at all! Because of the bombardment of media advertising, we have become deaf to most of what we hear. It is simply ignored. A good stewardship education program will increase the number of times one is exposed to the “message”. It will also seek a number of possible ways to “deliver the message”. If we have something worth telling, then we should tell it often.

A Scriptural Based Education:

The heart of any good stewardship program is its educational component. We are able to change only to the degree that we have adequate education and motivation. For Episcopal Christians, there are only three tests of orthodoxy—Scripture, Tradition, and Reason. The educational component must recognize each of these tests and at the same time avoid guilt and enhance growth.

A CALENDAR FOR YEAR ROUND STEWARDSHIP:

<u>Month</u>	<u>Tasks</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>
Jan & Feb	Annual Meeting Elect Wardens Plan Leadership Retreat	Rector & Vestry
Feb or Mar	Leadership Retreat Develop or Revise & Adopt Unique Ministry Statement Develop or Revise & Adopt Stewardship Statement Publish both Statements	Rector & Vestry
Feb & Mar	Six Week Lenten Program A video series for Adults on faith, Stewardship themes	Rector & Stewardship Committee

Mar or Apr	Develop Narrative Budget Vestry	
June-Aug	Adult classes on: Stewardship of Time Stewardship of Talent	Stewardship Committee
Sept-Oct	Rally Day to sign up Rector For ministries in parish Four week adult class on Stewardship of Treasure	Stewardship Committee
Oct-Nov	Publish again: Unique Ministry Statement Stewardship Statement Narrative Budget Announce Celebration Sunday in Newsletter	Rector & Stewardship Committee
	Celebration Sunday Pledge Card Collection Prepare Parish Budget	Vestry & Stewardship Vestry Vestry

THE ANNUAL MEETING - AN OPPORTUNITY

The Annual Parish Meeting can be a celebration; a time to demonstrate all that has been done in our Lord's name. It can be an occasion for a festival, banquet, recognition, and thanksgiving. This time, while required by both our General Convention and Diocesan Constitution & Canons, can be fun.

While it is common for individuals to have low interest in the church's annual meeting, and too often this malaise engulfs the clergy and leadership of the parish, we can change our attitude toward the meeting and see it as an opportunity to communicate how the church is being a good steward of its resources in fulfilling its purpose and mission. This can be a time to inform new people as to why this congregation exists and to reinforce the purpose and mission to those who have been around awhile. For those congregations where their purpose is clear this can be an exciting time.

Many congregations use the meeting as a time to explain the financial results of the past year and to present the new year's budget (it does not need to be voted upon or approved). Certainly the finances of the church are important but what is more important is to convey how the expenditures of the past year and the planned expenditure for the current year support the purpose and mission of the church. This is a time to demonstrate the church's stewardship of the resources made available to it.

The Diocesan Canons require an annual meeting to elect a Vestry (Board of Directors) and Officers. Consider holding the election in the context of worship. In prayer, prior to the introduction of nominees, and again before casting ballots, ask God for the gift of discernment. If the election is a contested election (more than one nominee for each vacancy) present the qualifications for electors. If an elector's qualifications are contested, resolve the dispute privately.

Additionally, the General Convention Canons (Canon 8) of the Episcopal Church require the meeting "to receive reports of officers and committees". Consider delivering the reports in writing as an addition to the Sunday morning order of worship. Following the service of worship, gather in the "parish hall", for display and a meal.

In the weeks preceding the Annual Meeting, ask those who are engaged in ministry (Service [outreach], Worship, Education, Evangelism, and Pastoral Care) and those who care to serve on committees of the Vestry to prepare a "booth" to be set-up in the parish hall. Other groups (Episcopal Churchwomen, Brotherhood of St. Andrew, Daughters of the King, Cursillo, Youth Groups, etc.) can be invited to set up their own booth as well. These "booths" might include photographs, videos, charts posters, or displays that show the "work" undertaken by that group during the past year.

Be sure to announce well in advance the importance of this day.

Decorate the Parish Hall. Consider having the youth groups sell hot dogs and soft drinks. Make it a festival! Line the "booths" around the parameter of the room, carnival style, and encourage members of the congregation to go from booth to booth.

THE ANNUAL MEETING — SOME DO'S AND DON'TS

Do show how the various organizations are helping in the fulfillment of the church's purpose and mission. Displays, photographs and video presentations are more effective than written reports.

Don't have individuals read reports, while those reports may be desirable and should be available, encourage members of the congregation to take the written reports home and read them carefully at their leisure.

Do show that ministries are being funded and how they are affecting people's lives. Talk about the non-monetary contributions of time and talent.

Don't present detailed line item financial reports and budgets. (The parish does not vote on the budget, and it may change multiple times throughout the year). Do not present a budget; instead suggest that those who have questions speak directly to the parish Treasurer.

Do describe how effective you have been and continue to be and focuses on describing the needs you are meeting, not the needs you have. Offer people opportunities to invest in your work.

Don't beg for money or say, "There are limited resources to meet so many needs". The time for pledging has past: if, however, there is a shortfall, separate the request for additional finding from the Annual Meeting. Use the Annual Meeting to generate excitement.

Do welcome all who will come. Invite and encourage all persons to attend. What better way to get people involved?

Don't give the impression that the meeting is only for "qualified electors". By virtue of our baptism, we all have a ministry. Help all baptized persons to see what has been accomplished and what they may be called to do.

LEADERSHIP TRAINING

PART ONE - Planning the Event & Laying the Ground Work

With the clergy, lay staff and the elected leadership of the congregation determine who the leaders of the congregation are. Some are elected; for instance, the Vestry and the Presidents of various Guilds. Others are not elected, for instance, lay assistants at worship, members of the choir and the 'movers and shakers' who rarely are in official positions but always make or break any congregational event. This group will number about ten percent of the total number of families in the congregation. In some small congregations (those of twenty-five or less) it may be wiser to assume that all members of the congregation are leaders.

Shortly after the Annual Meeting, invite these leaders to the home of a member of the congregation or in the congregation's meeting room. The invitation should be in person (or by phone) not generally issued to the entire congregation. The invitation should indicate that there are three purposes for the gathering: (1) Fellowship, (2) to consider the purpose and mission of the congregation, (3) to make some tentative plans for the future of the congregation. The invitation should clearly state that the gathering will last no more than three hours and that it will start and end promptly.

Suggested invitation to leadership team:

John or Mary, our Rector, the Wardens and I met recently to talk about life in our congregator. We want to make some plans for our future together and to consider how we might increase the service of faith, fellowship and mission in our congregation. We came up with a few good ideas, but we also realize that we need the help of others. We

want people who are committed to our Lord and to this congregation, excited about it's past and future; people who are faithful and regular in their attendance and recognized as leaders.

After prayerful consideration we believe you are one of the people we need to help us plan for the future. We would like you to come to _____'s house (123 First Street) on ____ (day), the ____ of (month) from 7 to 10 p.m.

There are three purposes for the gathering:

- (1) Fellowship,
- (2) To consider the purpose and mission of the congregation, and
- (3) To make tentative plans for our future together.

By 9:30 we will decide what our next steps might be and see if any of us are ready to move ahead. We will end promptly at 10:00. Can we count on you to be with us for this gathering?

Prepare carefully for the gathering. Make sure there will be coffee and other beverages for the guests and provide a light dessert. Provide hard-backed note pads and a pencil or pen for each small group. Provide a news print pad and marker for the recorder. The setting should be informal. A movable chair should be available for each person, tables should be limited to those necessary for resting places for coffee cups and dessert plates. Leadership should be shared among those who invited others to come to the meeting. Each leader should know what he or she is to do. Someone should be prepared to introduce everyone in the group. Another should lead the prayer and outline the agenda. Others should lead the small group discussions. Another should be assigned the task of recording the comments from the small groups.

Allow the group to gather and enjoy the refreshments until 7:15 and then begin the meeting the following prayer or another prayer.

Suggested prayer:

Almighty and everlasting God, you have called us together in your Name. Fill us now with the memory of your mighty deeds, surround us with the love you have made known to us in your Son, Jesus our Lord, fill us with your Holy Spirit, that in these discussions we may discern your will for us, serve you faithfully, and finally, by your mercy, obtain everlasting life through Jesus Christ our Lord who taught

us to pray, Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed ...

Follow this agenda:

SUGGESTED AGENDA FOR FIRST LEADERSHIP TEAM MEETING

7:00 Gather; introductions, coffee and refreshments.

7:15 Prayer; re-state Purpose: (1) fellowship, (2) to consider the purpose and mission of the congregation, (3) to make tentative plans for the future. Answer any questions about the agenda.

7:25 Ask the group to form smaller groups of three or four and reflect with one another on this question: What are some of the things you like best about our congregation?

7:50 Report this information to the larger group and record it on newsprint.

8:00 Ask the gathering to return to their smaller groups and respond to one or more of these questions: What do you believe is God's purpose for our congregation? or What are God's reasons for wanting our congregation? or If our congregation were to disappear tomorrow what difference would it make to our community?

8:20 Report this information to the larger group and record it on newsprint.

8:30 Ask the gathering to return to their small groups and respond to both of these questions: What new directions do you think God might want us to consider? What of those things we have done in the past do you think we no longer need to do?

9:00 Ask the larger group to respond to these comments and questions:

God has a number of reasons for us to be here. We are doing a number of exciting things together and we are expecting to do more. We can't do all of this alone. We need to discover ways to be better stewards or managers of our personal and corporate resources so that we can increase the work we do in the Lord's Name. Would you be interested in developing these ideas further? Would you be interested in a program of education and sharing that would help us manage our resources more effectively? What would you want from such a program? How many of you would be willing to meet again in order to continue this discussion and develop a Statement of Unique Ministry and a Stewardship Statement? (Be sure to record these comments on the newsprint.)

9:45 Thank the group for their comments and for their attendance. Adjourn with prayer.

Suggested closing prayer:

We thank you Lord for this congregation, for its witness, its fellowship and love; and for the ministries you have given

to us. Send us now on our separate ways, safe in our journey. Grant us nights of refreshment and rest; and renewed vigor for our ministries on the morrow. May the blessing of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be with us always.

Within one week send thank you notes to all who attended the gathering. Include a summary of the comments shared and recorded at the meeting. Invite the group to reconvene in two weeks for three hours on a Friday night and five hours on the following Saturday morning in order to complete the work they began.

BE SURE TO SAVE ALL MATERIALS DEVELOPED IN THIS EVENT FOR USE IN DEVELOPING A NARRATIVE BUDGET.

THE LEADERSHIP RETREAT

The First Segment — The Statement of Unique Ministry:

The goal is to write a single sentence with the words a third grade student can understand and use, which clearly expresses the Unique Mission and Ministry of the congregation and includes an operative clause such as ‘in order that...’

A Proposed Agenda and Suggested Content

THE AGENDA

7:00 Gather for light refreshments, introductions and opening prayers.

7:10 Present this agenda (without the times listed or the instructions given).

7:15 Read or paraphrase “Where there is no vision.. .” provided below.

7:25 Bible Reflections: (divide into small groups of three or four). After reading one of the following Bible passages discuss within your small group your answers to the following questions:

- What does God call us to do here and now?
- Which programs of this congregation respond to God’s call to us?
- John 15:12, Mat. 25:37-39, Malt. 28:1-20, Isaiah 61:1-3

7:50 Mission and Ministry Survey (return to a single large group; have newsprint and marker ready. Either the leader or one appointed ahead of time records all comments on the newsprint). Ask the group to list (brainstorm) all of the programs of the congregation that are exciting, enjoyable, about which they are most proud. (Do not debate. Require that the task be done in only ten minutes or the group will start to force onto the list

things they think ought to be there).

8:00 Arrange programs into Mission and Ministry categories: (Service, outreach, worship, education, evangelism and pastoral care). Recognizing the possible arbitrary nature of this exercise ask the group to place each program in one of the five Mission and Ministry categories.

8:20 Rank the five Mission and Ministries categories. Ask each member of the group to give a '1' to the category they find the most exciting or most interesting, a '2' to the one second most exciting and so forth for all five categories. Tally results. The category with the lowest score shows the highest interest.

8:45 Break. Allow the group to get refreshments and to reflect informally on the results of this part of the evening.

9:00 Re-convene and write the Statement of Unique Ministry. Ask the group to answer the following question: If our congregation did not exist what would be lacking in our community? What difference would it make to our community? (Record the answers on newsprint).

9:15 Ask the group to answer the following question: What is unique about our congregation compared to other Christian congregations in our community? (Record the answers on newsprint).

9:30 Define a Statement of Unique Ministry, i.e. it should be brief, not more than two sentences. It should be specific and distinguish the unique qualities of the congregation. It should be operative; all verbs, not passive; and it should include the phrase 'in order that...' It may describe the congregation geographically, economically and liturgically but it should not be limited to this description. It may describe the mission and ministry of the congregation but it should neither be a simple paraphrase of Scripture nor should it be so specific as to limit vision.

9:35 Ask the group to compose a Statement of Unique Ministry using all of the data from all the newsprint.

A Sample Vision Statement

St. _____ is a racially, economically and generationally diverse family of Christians who gather for traditional worship in order to be strengthened and empowered to heal the wounds of urban blight in our neighborhood.

10:00 Recess for the evening with closing prayers.

BE SURE TO SAVE ALL MATERIALS DEVELOPED IN THIS EVENT FOR USE IN DEVELOPING A NARRATIVE BUDGET.

“WHERE THERE IS NO VISION, THE PEOPLE PERISH”
(Proverbs 29:18)

What the author of Proverbs calls vision, Abraham Maslow calls Self-Actualization. In his psychological model Self-Actualization is the highest level of human need. In addition, all people have a need for love, self-esteem, security, and physical well-being. In his model, however, one begins by meeting, at least in part, the need for physical well-being then the needs for security or safety, for self-esteem and for love before one attempts to meet the need for self-actualization. What is true for individuals is also true for institutions and for the church. However, in the theological model, the order of the levels of need differ from the order suggested by Dr. Maslow. The author of Proverbs is clear about what is absolutely necessary for survival and, indeed, for life in any meaningful fashion is vision, a sense of future, and a sense of one's call. A desire for the other needs vanishes in comparison if one has no hope, no dreams, and no goals. There are dozens of stories about people who have been denied their physical needs (or denied themselves those needs) for extended periods of time and of those who have willingly accepted torture or persecution (lost security) for the sake of some higher calling. Those who enter hunger strikes, those who died in the period of Roman persecution of the church, those who plotted the assassination of Hitler, those who fought for the independence of our own nation were inspired not by a desire for gratification of their physical needs or for security, but rather by their vision, a sense of calling which transcended their physical needs. For the church, that comes as no surprise and, indeed, should remind us of the critical need for vision.

For those who believe that life is everlasting, the issue of temporal survival is only of secondary importance.

Ironically, when vision is clear, people are attracted to it. The Christian vision of love made manifest in Jesus Christ, calls people to sacramental love. When others see the Church act in love they hold the Church in high esteem (see Acts 2:43-47). They care for the well-being of the church. Recently, for instance, an Alcoholics Anonymous group, meeting in a church noticed a small fire set by vandals. Quickly they extinguished the fire and preserved the building. When others see the witness of the church they are attracted to it and become members of it. Together with those who are already members of the church, their offerings of time, talent, and money provide all of the resources needed not only for survival but also of mission and ministry.

Unfortunately many churches act as if Dr. Maslow's theory were correct for them. In their effort to meet the physical needs of the congregation (pay salaries and utilities etc.) they create budgets and coerce members into paying their fair share. If those needs are met the congregation's next concern is safety. As a result the building and every cupboard are locked tight as a drum. Community groups are excluded in order to 'protect the building'. There are fewer people of good will monitoring the use and activity of the church's building voluntarily. Jealousy or animosities are generated and frequently the

need for security rises still higher.

For the church at large and for each member of the church a vision is essential. One such vision is that offered by St. Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians. It is a vision which can be extended not only to the members of a congregation, but to groups of congregations, congregations as they relate to the community, to communities within the United States and all communities world-wide.

St. Paul's vision can be developed from the analogy he makes based on the human body. Each part has an essential role to play, each part is indispensable. All work together for the sake of the whole. In the world or national community such a vision would call out the best in all of us so that those ills which afflict us, pollution, hunger, injustice and oppression would be brought to an end. St. Paul specifically describes the Church as the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12). Christ himself being the head of the body. It is the task of the Body of Christ to make manifest the mind of Christ, to do the will of the Lord. We, the various parts of the body, have a variety of functions, or roles, which fall into the ministries of the church. Building on St. Paul's analogy, the Church reaches out in Service (social outreach) with the right hand, Worships with the heart, reaches out Evangelically with the Gospel in the left hand. It is supported for ministries of Service, worship and Evangelism by Education and Pastoral Care, the feet of the body. This body, well equipped, is related to the head by the neck, the leadership of the church.

Stewardship is the ground upon which the Body of Christ walks; it enables the ministry of the Body of Christ. Stewardship is not a ministry, it enables ministry. The resources given by God to the Church include time, talent and money of the people of each congregation. How the Body of Christ manages the resources entrusted to its care, whether that management is informed by and responsive to the mind of Christ, will determine whether or not the various ministries of the Church are as effective as they can be, whether are not they are faithful.

Leaders of the church discern and articulate the mission and ministry entrusted to the church by God. The ordained and lay leaders of the church discern what is in the mind of Christ and make it known to the body. If the leaders are not connected to the mind of Christ, the body may thrash about convulsively; it may even do occasional good works, but that which it does may not reflect at all our Lord's call to us. If the leadership of the church is connected to the mind of Christ, but unconnected to the body, the result is the same. A congregation in which the leaders are not connected to both the mind and body of Christ is like the human body in which the spinal cord has been severed. In a very short time it will die. The role of the leaders, then, is essential to the life and witness, the mission and ministry, indeed, to the very life of the church.

Leaders have, therefore, an awesome responsibility. In some sense they must be the prophets of the modern church. It is their task to give to the Church the vision it needs to thrive, to grow, to have life in its fullness. The author of Proverbs was correct, "Where there is no vision, the people perish".

God has given every congregation all that it needs to do His work. There's always more to do, but what's being done may reflect the gifts of the current congregation and the ministry to which it is currently responding. As a congregation becomes more faithful, as more of the resources are discovered and used effectively, so will the tasks God sets before the congregation increase.

A diagnostic view of the average congregation will look a bit like a series of concentric circles. The inner core of any congregation, those who come to church every week unless ill or out of town, those who are highly active, serve on more than one committee of the congregation, are about ten percent of the total congregation, regardless of the numerical size of the congregation. Those who are active, who come to church twice a month or more, who serve occasionally on a committee and come to most social functions, those whose names and faces are both known to most of the congregation make up an additional thirty percent.

Those who come to church less than once a month, attend some of the social functions, whose name or face is known but few can make the connection, represent another thirty percent. Those who come twice a year, the "C and E Christians" (Christmas & Easter), those who come to 'pay their semiannual eternal life insurance premium', whose name and face can rarely be connected except by the Rector, represent another thirty percent. Finally, there are those who consider themselves members of the congregation but no one knows that until there is a baptism, wedding or funeral.

This diagnosis is of an average, but unhealthy congregation. In a healthy congregation the percentages would be reversed. Only ten percent would be "C and E Christians"; those who are in attendance in order to begin their faith journey, or are simply curious. Each of the other groups is moving increasingly toward the center. The leadership will come from the inner circles and will witness to and model such faithfulness that those who are in the outer circles will be drawn toward the center.

The committed leadership team is those who are in the inner circle. These are persons who have the greatest interest in the life of the congregation and are the ones most likely to support it by their presence, time, talent and money. These are the ones most likely to be interested in their own spiritual growth. They are also the ones to whom others look for guidance. A good stewardship education program will invite these persons to reflect on their faith and the mission of the congregation.

The role of leaders then is to offer a vision to the church that is faithful and attractive, exciting and inviting. That vision must be clear, concise, easily understood and recognized as valid by all members of the congregation. Its purposes are:

- To discern and articulate God's unique calling to their congregation.
- To permit the leadership team the opportunity to witness to their faith.
- To model for others the faithfulness of the leadership team.
- To invite others to engage in the exciting ministries of the congregation.

- To provide a tool for accountability.

The task of developing such a vision is not as difficult as it sounds. It can be enjoyable, even fun. However, there is a need to recognize several important fundamentals. We cannot do this work without prayer and the intervention of God in our hearts and minds. Any attempt to discern the will of God must begin with prayer, be surrounded by prayer, and ended in prayer, for it is through prayer that we enter into conversation *with* God and through prayer that we hear God's voice.

We must also recognize that God has made us as a gifted people. We have gifts and talents in abundance. Those talents are given for our enjoyment and for the work God intends us to do. Therefore, we will quickly discover that those things which are most enjoyable, those things we like to do, of which we are most proud, those are the ministries that are most likely to be the ones God called us to undertake.

Finally, we must recognize that we may not at this time be called to do everything. There may be some things, which are worthwhile, even desirable, that we simply cannot do at this time. We must trust that God has empowered others to do those things, that they are members of that larger body and will do for us what we cannot now do. Perhaps at some later time we will be able to undertake them, but for now, we will do what we are empowered and gifted to do.

In one congregation, vast energy, talents and significant dollars were committed to a Sunday School Program. Year after year, however, in spite of the best efforts of the leaders, it became increasingly difficult to recruit teachers. Year after year dollars were committed to purchasing supplies and materials for the Sunday School. Hours were spent in frustrating and sometimes harshly judgmental discussion concerning Sunday School. All of this for three children, one six, one nine and one twelve. Finally, it became obvious to the congregation that they were not called to provide a Sunday School. Instead they contracted with a neighboring congregation for Sunday School education and placed their energy in evangelism. Within two years the congregation had grown large enough to warrant a new Sunday School Program.

The vision of a congregation is expressed in its Statement of Unique Ministry. While that statement has some lasting value and is not likely to change dramatically year after year, it should be reviewed regularly not only for modest amendment, but also for clarity.

Often the first draft of the Statement of Unique Ministry is more cumbersome than necessary, but those who authored it, having been caught up in their own enthusiasm, are so wedded to their own ideas that they cannot simplify their initial attempt. A year or two later, vested interest wanes and the same or another group of leaders is able to condense the thoughts expressed earlier.

For the next segment of our time together, we will develop a first draft of our own Statement of Unique Ministry.

THE LEADERSHIP RETREAT

Second Segment — A Stewardship Statement.

The goal is to enable each person to articulate his or her own personal decision concerning their plan for giving a percentage of their money to God and God's work. Required supplies for this session include: a Bible for each person (or a minimum of one Bible for each three people), newsprint and markers, note pads and pens for each person.

Proposed Agenda and Suggested Content. Times are approximate and may be adjusted based on the needs of the group.

AGENDA

8:30 Gather for refreshments and brief fellowship.

9:00 Opening prayers. Review agenda (without listed times and instructions).

9:05 Part One - *Scripture*

Introduction #1 (Leader — read from suggested content below).

9:15 Bible Study #1 - in small groups.

9:30 Reflections #1 (Leader — read from suggested content below).

9:40 Introduction #2 (Leader — read from suggested content below).

9:45 Bible Study #2— in small groups.

10:00 Reflections #2 (Leader - from suggested content below).

10:15 Break

10:25 Part Two - *Tradition*

Introduction #3 (Leader — read from suggested content below).

10:30 Bible Study #3 — in small groups— discuss selected passages from the Bible and early Christian practices.

10:40 Bible Study #4— in small groups — read silently.

10:45 Reflection #3 (Leader — read from suggested content below).

10:55 Introduction #4 (Leader — read from suggested content below).

11:00 Study of Early church Authors — in small groups.

11:15 Reflection #4 (Leader — read from suggested content below).

11:30 Part Three — *Reason*
Introduction #5— (Leader — read from suggested content below).

11:45 Adjourn for Noonday Prayers and lunch.

12:45 Re-convene — Leader - read from suggested content below.

12:50 Bible Study #5 — in small groups.

1:00 Reflection #5 (Leader — read from content below).

1:15 Hand out the Letter from GOD (see below). Individual activity, complete the Letter to God.

1:30 Reflection #6 (Leader — read from content below).

2:00 Celebrate Holy Eucharist. *For Propers: Use pg. 67; Is. 49:5-13; Eph. 3:1-12 and Matt. 28:16-20.*

PART ONE — SCRIPTURE

9:05 Introduction #1

Once there was an executive director of a mental hospital who, on an introductory tour met the out-going executive director in the office. The new executive officer asked the one who was leaving for advice in the event crises arose. The out-going director said, “I’ll do for you what has been done for me. I will write three notes and leave them each in an envelope in the center drawer of your desk. If you have a crisis perhaps the advice in the notes will help.” The newly appointed director was a bit disappointed but thanked the former executive nevertheless.

Things went smoothly for the first six months. Then one day the patients in the sixth ward went out of control. They threw their medications on the floor, smashed the television and destroyed much of the day room furniture. The riot was bad enough for the president of the hospital to hear of it. He called the executive director and said that unless the situation improved the executive’s job would be in jeopardy.

The executive went immediately to the desk, pulled open the center drawer and found the three envelopes marked ONE, TWO and THREE. Carefully, the envelope marked ONE was torn open. Inside there was a single sheet of paper folded in half. With trembling hands the director opened the sheet of paper and found only one word. It was RE-

ORGANIZE. “Re-organize!” said the director, “that’s exactly what I need to do!” Immediately the day shift was changed to the night shift and orderlies from ward two were sent to ward six. In no time the rioting was under control.

All went well for another six months. Then one day, all of the patients in the East Wing rioted. They started a food fight in the cafeteria, set mattresses on fire and sounded the fire alarm system. The riot was so bad that the mayor of the neighboring city called to say that unless the executive could bring it under control, she would have to dispatch the police department.

The executive director ran to the desk and pulled open the center drawer. The envelope marked TWO was found and with trembling hands he torn it open. Again, there was a single sheet of paper, folded in half. Printed upon it was the word RESTRUCTURE. “Re-Structure!” said the director, “That’s exactly what I must do”. The next day several assistants were hired, others re-deployed and in a matter of hours the rioting came to an end.

Another six months went by without incident. Then one day the whole hospital rioted. The patients set fire to cars in the parking lot, pulled at the fences and held some of the staff hostage in the third ward. The Governor heard of the riot and called to say that unless the executive could control the riot the National Guard would be sent to restore order.

The executive went to the desk for what would be the third and final time. Praying that the advice in this last note would be as helpful as the advice in the previous two, the director once again opened the single sheet of paper. Printed on the page were these words: WRITE THREE NOTES.

FUND-RAISING OR STEWARDSHIP

What we mistakenly call stewardship sounds a bit like that doesn’t it? We ask someone to lead our “Stewardship Campaign” or our “EMC” or “Loyalty Sunday”. For a while the program seems to work, but then the stewardship chairperson feels a need to re-organize, then re-structure and then to resign. The Rector then tries to find another person to be the “Stewardship Chairperson” and the cycle begins all over again.

Stewardship is a word poorly understood and frequently misused in much of the Church. Formerly it meant the management of the possessions of another, see *Gen. 41-45*, where Joseph is the steward for Pharaoh or *Luke 16*, where the steward is dismissed for wasting the rich man’s property or *I Cor.4:1-2* where St. Paul refers to us as stewards entrusted with the mysteries for God. A steward managed that which belonged to another. Today we frequently use the word stewardship to mean the process through which we raise money for the expenses of the local congregation and its outreach programs. The latter understanding is unfortunate. It robs us of one of the most powerful images we have from Scripture and it trivializes the importance of Christian discipleship.

What we have for years mistakenly called “stewardship” has become the “Fall Spasm” in which people who don’t want to call are asked to call on those who don’t want to receive a call, to give money they don’t want to give. What we have mistakenly called stewardship is really nothing more than fund-raising done poorly — very poorly. Fund-raising has an important place in our society. We have learned much from fund-raisers and are in their debt. However, there is an important difference between fund-raising and stewardship.

Fund-raising, in this simplified and perhaps unfair summary, generally does the following:

- Creates a list of desirable goals known as the “Proposal”.
- Sets a dollar goal for the proposal.
- Creates an organization to raise the dollars necessary.
- Motivates giving primarily through either guilt or peer pressure.
- Solicits money and/or pledges from all possible donors regardless of their interest or commitment to the proposal.
- Raises money or pledges amounting to the dollar goal plus or minus ten percent (10%).
- Experiences significant shrinkages (unpaid pledges; usually 10%).
- Leaves those involved in the fund-raising campaign exhausted and/or discouraged.
- For decades, many congregations have used fund-raising techniques. Occasionally they have been successful. Frequently they find a need for additional fund-raising campaigns. New gimmicks are used, different fund-raisers are employed and the congregation, like the executive in the story, reorganizes, restructures and then starts all over again with new leadership. Fund-raising has a place, perhaps even in the church, when there is a specific need of short duration, but fund-raising is not stewardship.
- For Christians, faith is of great importance. To return to God (through church and charities) a portion of our money and other resources is one obvious sign of faithfulness. Indeed, if we were not to do so, we would be subject to the criticism St. James leveled against the Church of his day, “faith apart from works is dead” (*James 2:26*). If our faith is important to us we will demonstrate that by managing our resources accordingly. Jesus said it better, “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (*Luke 12:34*). Our problem as Christians, is to find an appropriate, prudent method of management, way to set faithful priorities within the many worthwhile, but competing values and needs to which we must respond.

All of this is to say that there is a difference between stewardship and fund-raising.

Christian stewardship generally does the following:

- Increases commitment to God, confronts us with the theological and practical implications of our faith and helps us manage more effectively.

- Creates excitement about the mission of the church.
- Provides for spiritual growth.
- Provides an opportunity for conversation concerning life in Christ.
- Results in an increase in dollars available for the mission and ministry of the Church. Results in minimal shrinkage.
- Enables the congregation to feel good about themselves and excited about their future. Stewardship and fund-raising have their proper place but there is a clear distinction between them. We must decide at the outset, which we wish to do. Do we simply want to raise money or do we want to help ourselves and our brothers and sisters in Christ become better stewards of the resources God has entrusted to us and through our stewardship enable the Church to do the work God has called us to do?
- Stewardship is concerned with the expression of belief or value of personal priorities, and as we will quickly note, stewardship is not uniquely Christian. Indeed, we have for many years used the word incorrectly when we refer to the ship's steward, the wine steward, the steward or stewardess on airplane, the stewardship of our natural resources, and so forth.
- Stewardship is: the way we express personally what we believe; or all that I do with all that I have all of the time; or all that I do after I say I believe, or quite simply, stewardship is management.
- If stewardship is truly "what we do with what we have", if it is "the way we express what we believe", then stewardship is a matter of faith. How one manages is governed by what one believes. Stewardship is ultimately the matter of faith. Before we can address the question of how one is to be a more effective manager or steward, we must first reflect upon what one believes.

The Chief Idols

Throughout history there have been three chief idols. They can be discerned in the first eight verses of the 32nd chapter of the Book of Exodus (Ex 32:1-8). In those verses we hear what the people of the Exodus did while Moses was on Mount Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments.

Please break into small groups of four to six people and find *Exodus 32, verses 1-8* in your Bibles. Read the passage silently, and then have one member of your group read the same passage out loud. After you have read the passage, with the others in your small group, find the three idols that appear in the passage.

An idol is something that promises life, but delivers death. In the passage from Exodus, there are symbols for the idols. The three symbols are Aaron, rings of gold and the calf. Take the next fifteen minutes to read the passage and see if you and your group can discover the three idols.

9:15 Bible Study #1 in Small Group Discussion

9:30 Reflection #1

In Exodus 32, we see all three of the idols that have tempted people throughout history. We note that God had given power and authority to Moses to lead the people but Aaron allowed the people to bestow it on him. He took the power that rightfully belonged to Moses and made it his own. Therein, we see the first idol, **Power**.

Aaron then told the people to take the rings of gold from their ears. We must remember that those rings were not jewelry, but rather the economic security of the family. In the event that the father died before he had a son who had reached the age of maturity, all of the father's property reverted to the tribe. The wife and children were left destitute. To prevent his family from becoming destitute, the father made rings of gold and placed them in the ears of his wife and children. In the event of his death then the family could remove the rings of gold and use the proceeds from their sale for survival. The golden rings were the symbol for the wealth of the whole family. They represent the second idol, **Money**.

The calf, a symbol for the fertility gods of the Near East, represents the third idol, **Sex**. Lest we miss the point, the author of the book of Exodus reminds us that the people rose up in the morning to offer sacrifices to their gods and that their "worship" included an orgy. Twice, in those eight verses we hear words such as these: "These are your gods, Oh Israel who brought you out of Egypt."

St Paul is also concerned about these matters. He makes explicit reference to the above-mentioned passage from Exodus (*1 Cor. 10:7*) and denounces a variety of practices, which were associated with the idols of his day (*1 Cor. 5:9-11*). He reminds Timothy, "the love of money is the root of all evil and there are some who, pursuing it, have wandered away from the faith.. ." (*1 Tim. 6:10*). Jesus made explicit reference to the idol called money when he said, "You cannot serve both God and money" (*Luke 16:13*). These idols are not just the gods of antiquity; they are alive and well, even flourishing today. Consider the way some have pursued power in our own time, Adolph Hitler and Saddam Hussein being chief among them. Those who worship the idol of power mangle vast amounts of time, talent and money in order to seek and gain greater power. Consider how, even today, some are subdued by the idol called sex. Its temples are the X-rated theaters; its scriptures are pornographic magazines. Consider, too, how many of us are tempted by the idol of money. We have personified it and "watched our money grow". The temples for this idol line Wall Street and the business district of all major cities. We read the financial pages with as much devotion as we read the Bible. We are fascinated by the lives of the rich and famous.

The three chief idols, *Power, Sex and Money*, have sought our loyalty for over four thousand years. They have been in competition with the God of our ancestors, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Rachel and with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. How we manage will depend on who or what we worship. Will we manage in order to gain increasing power? Better sex? Greater wealth? Or will we manage in order to give praise to God and serve God's people? Our Stewardship will depend on our faith. It will depend on in whom and in what we place our ultimate trust and hope.

Stewardship is a matter of Faith.

The Three Questions of Faith

All religions try to answer the same three questions; questions that arise in every human heart:

Who am I? Why am I here? Where am I going? Whether the religion is one of the great-organized religions or whether it be an attempt at no religion, still the questions arise and beg for answers. The religions of the Far East generally answer that one is part of a larger, cosmic universe that we are here in order to purify ourselves and that we will, if we follow the correct practices, eventually become part of the cosmos. Agnosticism claims that one cannot know the answers to the three questions of faith. Atheism simply ignores the questions as irrelevant. Communism, as practiced in the Eastern European nations in the twentieth century, responds to the three questions of faith by attributing to the state many of the answers given by the monotheistic religions. (Who am I? A member of the party. Why am I here? To serve the state. Where am I going? Into the annals of the history of the state). Pantheism invites its believers to worship numerous gods, most of which are reflected in the natural order. The three great monotheistic religions respond to the questions by assuring believers that they are creatures of God, here to Serve God, and will at some point in time be rewarded by God. Finally, people have worshiped idols of all kinds.

In What Or In Whom Do Christians Believe?

A passing reflection on Scripture will give us at least a few answers, ones adequate for our purposes. With reference to the question: Who am I? we can find in *Genesis 1:26-31* that we are made in the image and likeness of God. God declares that we are Good, Very Good. Like God, we are creative and are, by nature benefactors, givers. We are also the trusted custodians of creation. We are the ones appointed by God to manage all of the creation of God. In the Gospel according to St. John we are reminded that we are not slaves or servants, but rather friends (*John 15:15*). In *Romans 8:14* we are called sons (and daughters) of God and joint heirs with Christ Jesus. We are then, creatures who reflect the nature of God, friends of the Messiah, and heirs with him of the kingdom of God.

Our reason for being, why we are here, is described in *Matt. 22:37*, *Matt. 25:31-40*, *John 21:15-17* and *Eph. 1:11-14*. Simply put, we are here to love, worship and praise God and to serve God's people.

Our destiny is described in the Revelation of John. We are going to the heavenly Jerusalem, a return to Eden, to the full presence of God eternally (*Rev. 22:1-5*). For us, Christianity provides the answers to life's three questions, answers that have inspired us and answers that invite us to live in a particular way as an expression of our faith. What management principles are reflected in the Christian faith and life?

For Episcopalians, there are three tests to be met in order for a position to be considered orthodox or binding upon us. Those three tests are: Is this position consistent with Holy Scripture? Does this position have historic precedent (Tradition)? And is the position reasonable (Reason).

9:40 Introduction #2

Good management requires setting priorities. The importance of any one part of our lives is often represented by the percent of our resources we commit to it. Moreover, there are “rules of thumb” by which others determine what percent of our income should be assigned to which part of lives. For instance, few lending institutions will permit a monthly mortgage payment that exceeds 30% of one’s monthly income. All of us allocate some percent of our money, time and talent to each of the things we consider important (i.e. food, clothing, shelter, entertainment, transportation, etc.). For some of us the allocation and the percentage are conscious decisions. For others, they are unconscious. Nevertheless, each of us does set aside a percentage of our resources for each of the things we consider important. Stewardship is the way we act/manage as a personal expression of what we believe. It is to “put our money where our mouth is”.

To be a Christian steward/manager means to adopt willingly a particular set of priorities that represent a particular faith. It is willing, freely chosen and symbolic. Like a wedding ring, it is an outward and visible symbol of the covenant relationship.

Stewardship is a lifestyle, the way we live our whole lives. The principles we choose will guide the way we use our time, our talent and our money. Indeed, our contemporary distinctions between time, talent and money are a rather recent invention. In the Biblical era, for the shepherd, talent was used to protect and nurture his sheep and the sheep in his fold represented all of his wealth. In the same way a goldsmith, silversmith and tailor could not have made the distinctions we make. They even took their family name from the life they lived.

What then, are the management principles that will help us to express the importance of our faith? The first test for us is Scripture. Let’s see what the Bible recommends as a management principle.

9:45 Bible Study #2 — In Small Groups

Please turn again to your small groups. Read *Matt. 3:6-10* and *Luke 11:42* silently, then aloud, and respond to this question: What Does God Expect of Me In These Passages?

10:00 Reflection #2

Malachi and those who heard him believed that the words spoken by the prophet were not those of the prophet, but rather literally the words of God. It was as if the prophet were simply the public address system, the sound system that God used. For Malachi it was

God who said, ...“ you are robbing me. But you say how are we robbing you? In the matter of tithes and offerings.. .bring the full tithe...”

There are certain assumptions underlying this part of the passage. The God who made us all knows we need food, clothing, shelter and a whole host of other things for our well-being. In His generosity, God has provided them for our needs, not necessarily our desires. For instance, we need fluids each day, water will do, but we sometimes say I need a coke. Or we may need a new car. For about \$15,000 we can purchase a new car, but we say we need a \$45,000 SUV. God will provide for our needs, not necessarily for our desires!

God would not want us to go hungry or naked in order to express our love for Him, so God gives us ten percent more than we need. The ten percent is called the tithe, an old English word that literally means 10%. It is spelled T I T H E. I wish it were spelled T I P, since a tip is now 20%, and a tithe is only 10%. God said, “You are robbing me”. And the people asked how? By keeping the tithe that He gave you for the purpose of a thank-offering to Him! The tithe was not a particularly remarkable thing. It was the minimum amount one could give and still be considered faithful enough to say his or her prayers. It was like dues or a membership fee.

Notice that God calls for offerings. These offerings were above and beyond the minimum dues required. They included the purification offerings, harvest offerings, first fruits offerings and once each seven years the release of all slaves and the forgiving of all debts. For a faithful first century Jew, including Jesus, the disciples and their contemporaries, these offerings could amount to an additional 20% of what one earned annually. That meant the faithful first century Jew, on a seven year average, gave as much as 30% of all they had to God and God’s work!

What about taxes? Just as we pay taxes, it was also true in the first century. Matthew, Levi and Zacchaeus were all tax collectors. The tax rate was approximately 20%, plus a commission charged by the tax collector to pay his salary. That commission was generally about 10%. Now you know why Matthew, Levi, Zacchaeus and the other tax collectors were so unpopular! The average first century Jew paid about 30% of all they had in taxes, which is very near what most of us pay in Federal, state and local taxes.

The taxes gathered in the first century were used for much the same purposes as they are today. The Roman army was funded by taxes; Pontius Pilate’s salary and all of the governmental officials were paid by taxes; governmental buildings and even the theaters were paid for by taxes. The Appian Way is still in use today and it was paid for by taxes.

The faithful first century Jew gave to God and God’s work 30% of all they had, 30% went for taxes and the remaining 40% was what the average first century Jew, Jesus, the disciples and the Pharisees had to provide for theft personal needs.

Notice that God said, “put me to the test”. This is the only place in the Bible in which we are told to test God! And it has specifically to do with how we manage our money!

Finally God said, “See if I don’t open the windows of heaven.., and pour out an overflowing blessing”. This is not a cause and effect relationship, but rather one of discovery. When we manage faithfully, we will discover the blessings God has given us. Notice in the passage from the Gospel according to St. Luke that Jesus tells the scribes and Pharisees that they should tithe even the smallest of things, mint and dill. They should do without neglecting justice and the love of God.

We do not want to be accused of proof testing, so are there other passages that make the same point? Indeed there are: Consider *Lev. 2 7:30-33*, *Matt. 23:23*, *Luke 12:32-34*, *Luke 18:18-29*, *Gen. 28:20-22* and *James 2:1 4-19*. The largest single concern in the New Testament is our relationship to money. Two-thirds of all the parables of Jesus deal with this concern!

10:15 Break

PART TWO - TRADITION

10:25 Introduction #3

Holy Scripture seems to set before us a management principle. We are expected to offer to God at least 10% of all that we have. The first test seems to have been met; but we hold two additional tests, Tradition and Reason. Let us now turn our attention to Tradition. Is there a historic Christian precedent for the management principle of giving to God and God’s work 10% of all that we have? What has been the practice of the Christian church throughout history?

The earliest record of the Christian Church is found in the Acts of the Apostles. There we see what the earliest Christians did and believed.

10:30 Bible Study #3 — In Small Groups

Please turn again to your small groups. Read silently, then aloud *Acts 2:44-47*. In your group: Try to determine what you believe was the practice of the earliest Christians.

10:40 Bible Study #4—In Small Groups

Please turn to *Acts 4:32-5:11* and read that passage silently. In a moment I will paraphrase this passage so I’d like you to read the passage first.

10:45 Reflection #3

Ananias and Sapphira were husband and wife. They had heard about the Christians and

about all the good they were doing. Ananias and Sapphira decided that they wanted to be a part of the community and so they went to St. Peter one day and said, “Peter, we have this piece of property out in the suburbs. We think we’ll sell it and give the proceeds of the sale to you and to the church”. “That’s wonderful”, Peter said. “You don’t need to do that, but if you do we will be most grateful”.

So Ananias and Sapphira went to their local real estate agent. The agent said, “I have good news for you! I have a buyer for your property. In fact he has been asking me about it for some time. He wants to build a shopping mall there and has already told me to offer you \$1,000,000 for the whole lot!”

Ananias and Sapphira were dumbfounded. The offer was way beyond their expectations. They had thought that the property was so remote that no one would want it. They figured they would be lucky to get \$10,000.

A month later, as they left the closing, Ananias the liberated man that he was, gave his wife Sapphira half of the proceeds from the sale of the property (\$500,000). Then he said, “You know honey, this is an awful lot of money to give to the church, I think I’ll keep \$100,000 for myself. I’ll put it here in my wallet and I’ll give the rest to the church”. Sapphira agreed and she too put \$100,000 of her half of the proceeds into her purse. Then she said, “Ananias, I need to stop at the grocery store. You go ahead to the church and give Peter your share of the proceeds and I’ll meet you there later”.

Ananias went to the church and walked into Peter’s office with his wallet bulging and a large envelope in his hand. He said, “Peter, I have good news. Remember that piece of property I told you about? We sold it and here is my half of the proceeds.” He gave Peter the envelope. Peter said, “Ananias, is that all of it?”

“Sure is!” said Ananias. And with that he dropped over dead.

Shortly after they carried Ananias out of Peter’s office, Sapphira arrived with her purse bulging and a bag of groceries in her hand and an envelope filled with money. She handed Peter the envelope and said, “Peter, I’m sure my husband has told you we sold the property. Here is my half of the proceeds”.

“Is that all of it?” asked Peter. “Sure is!” answered Sapphira. And with that she too dropped over dead and a can of peas rolled down the aisle.

Obviously this is a bit of a paraphrase of the story, but there are two points. First, even the unfaithful Ananias and Sapphira believed that they should give their money to God and to God’s work through the church. Second point is that Ananias and Sapphira died not because of how much they gave, but because they lied about how much they gave.

10:55 Introduction #4

In the early church, there is evidence that the principles of management included at least the minimum of a tithe. According to the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, many sold all they had and gave it to God and God's work through the church.

Now let's see if that same practice continued after the first century. Two examples from the early church authors may help. (*Distribute copies of the readings listed below to all those present.*)

Please turn again to your small groups and read silently, then aloud, the selections from St. John Chrysostom and Gregory of Nazianzus. Reflect aloud in your group on this question:

What seems to be the Management Principles commended by these two early church leaders?

11:00 Study of Early Church Authors — in small Groups

From the Second Sermon on Lazarus and the Rich Man by St. John Chrysostom (350-407AD)

“See the man,” He says, “and his works: indeed this also is theft, not to share one's possessions.” Perhaps this statement seems surprising to you, but do not be surprised. I shall bring you testimony from the divine Scriptures, saying that not only the theft of others goods, but also the failure to share one's own goods with others is theft and swindle and defraudation. What is this testimony? Accusing the Jews by the prophet, God says, “The earth has brought forth her increase, and you have not brought forth your tithes: but the theft of the poor is in your houses”. “Since you have not given the accustomed offerings”, He says, “You have stolen the goods of the poor”. He says that is to show the rich that they hold goods of the poor even if they have inherited them from their fathers or no matter how they have gathered their wealth. And elsewhere the Scripture says, “Deprive not the poor of their living.” To deprive is to take what belongs to another, for it is called deprivation when we take and keep what belongs to others. By this we are taught that when we do not show mercy, we will be punished just like those who steal, for the money is the Lord's, however we may have gathered it. If we provide for those in need we shall obtain great plenty. This is why God has allowed you to have mote: not for you to waste on prostitutes, drink, fancy food, expensive clothes and all the other kinds of indolence, but for you to distribute to those in need. Just as an official in the imperial treasury, if he neglects to distribute where he is ordered, but spends instead for his own indolence, pays the penalty and is put to death, so also the rich man is a kind of steward of the money, which is owned for the distribution to the poor. He is directed to distribute it to his fellow servants who are in want. So if he spends more on himself than his need requires, he will pay the harshest penalty hereafter. For his own goods are not his, but belong to his fellow servants.

From a Sermon

by Gregory of Nazianzus, Bishop of Constantinople (389)

Who has given you dominion over animals, those that are tame and those that provide you with food? Who has made you master of everything on earth? In short, who has endowed you with all that makes humankind superior to all other living creatures?

Is it not God who asks you now in your turn to show yourselves generous above all other creatures and for the sake of all other creatures? Because we have received from him so many wonderful gifts, will we not be ashamed to refuse him this one thing only, our generosity? Though he is God and Lord, he is not afraid to be known as our Father. Shall we for our part repudiate those who are our kith and kin?

Friends, let us never allow ourselves to misuse what has been given us by God's gift. If we do, we shall hear Saint Peter say: "Be ashamed of yourselves for holding on to what belongs to someone else. Resolve to imitate God's justice and no one will be poor." Let us not labor to heap up and hoard riches while others remain in need. If we do, the prophet Amos will speak out against us with sharp and threatening words: "Come now, you that say: When will the new moon be over, so that we may start selling? When will Sabbath be over, so that we may start opening our treasures?"

Let us put into practice the supreme and primary law of God. He sends down rain on just and sinful alike, and causes the sun to rise on all without distinction. To all earth's creatures he has given the broad earth, the springs, the rivers and the forests. He has given the air to the birds and the waters to those who live in water. He has given abundantly to all the basic needs of life, not as a private possession, not restricted by law, not divided by boundaries, but as common to all, amply and in rich measure. His gifts are not deficient in any way, because he wanted to give equality of blessing to equality of worth and to show the abundance of his generosity.

{Other early church authors' writings are available in the A appendix}

11:15 Reflections #4

Clearly in the early church our Christian ancestors adopted a management principle that used 10% of one's annual income as a minimum. Some it seems literally sold all they had and gave it to the Church for distribution among those in need.

In the fifth century, Caesar had a vision and with the encouragement of his mother, Helena, declared Christianity to be the official religion of the Roman Empire. One result of this remarkable decision was that over the course of time, the "state" began funding the church. With this "new found" funding, Christians, in thanksgiving began making offerings during their sacramental worship. Once known as "stole fees" these offerings were made to the church during Eucharists, baptisms, wedding and funerals.

Our early colonial ancestors, as the result of their independence from the English crown, lost “state” support for the church. Many returned to the principles of tithing.

In 1979, The General Convention of the Episcopal Church passed a resolution declaring, “Stewardship is the Main work of the Church”. In 1982, and in every General Convention thereafter, the General Convention of the Episcopal Church has declared that the “tithe” (10%) is the Biblical norm for Christian giving and commends the principle of giving 10% of all that one has to God through the Church. In 1997, The Diocese of Southwest Florida adopted a resolution that reads: “Resolved: That the tithe as set forth in Holy Scripture be adopted as the minimum standard for giving by the people of this Diocese and that all congregations strive to attain this goal”. For over twenty years we as a Church have re-affirmed a tradition begun by our earliest ancestors.

It seems that there is indeed historic precedent, Tradition, for a management principle that expects giving 10% of all that we have to God.

PART THREE - REASON

11:30 Introduction #5

The third test is Reason. Does the position presented make sense? Is it reasonable? Is it reasonable to give to God 10% of all that we have?

To answer that question, let’s do a little simple mathematics. What is 10% of \$100,000? (\$10,000). A person whose annual income is \$100,000 would have \$90,000 left after giving 10% to God. That \$90,000 is two to three times the annual income provided for the average schoolteacher in this country! Now, let’s try another math problem. What is 10% of \$0? (\$0). That means that a person with no income can give \$0 and still keep his promise to God!

There are seven Cardinal Virtues:

1. Justice (the equitable distribution of the earth’s resources).
2. Fortitude (the courage of one’s convictions).
3. Temperance (all things in moderation).
4. Prudence (the right thing at the right time).
5. Faith (doubt committed).
6. Hope (all is in God’s loving care).
7. Love (*Agape*’ to offer oneself willingly and completely on behalf of another without the expectation of reward or return).

These virtues can be expressed through our management of the resources, including money, which God has placed in our care. Justice is manifest when we share what we have with those in need. Fortitude is exercised through our pledge card. By signing a pledge card we are affirming our belief in God and saying, “Here is where I stand!”

Temperance is exercised when we make the distinctions we need to make between need and desire.

Prudence, to do the right thing at the right time, is demonstrated when we have a plan of increased proportional giving, the goal of which is a tithe. With the virtue of faith we affirm that, while we do not know what tomorrow may hold, nevertheless, we trust in God's providence. Our Hope is not a Pollyanna view of pie in the sky, but rather that God's will is and shall be done. Finally, in the virtue of *Agape* we offer our time, talent, money, and ourselves as living sacrifices for God and His people.

The average giving among Americans to Church and charities combined is between 1.8% and 3.4% (depending on where in the USA you live). If we are to be entirely honest, for many of us, the principle of giving 10% may be reasonable, but to increase our giving from 3.4% to 10% overnight is not a prudent thing to do. It would not be the right thing to do at this time.

For us to adopt the management principle of 10%, we must enter into a program of increased giving, the goal of which is 10% within three to five years. After a lunch break, we will consider how we might begin such a program of increased giving.

11:45 Noonday Prayers and Lunch

12:45 Re-convene — Introduction #5

Before lunch we considered the three chief idols of all human history and in small groups considered the three fold test of faith. We discovered there is Biblical, Traditional and Reasonable evidence to support the management principle of giving to God at least 10% of all we have. We ended our morning session by acknowledging that for many of us, while a tithe is desirable and right, it may not be prudent.

Let's begin this afternoon session with one more passage from the Bible. In your groups, please turn to *Luke 19:1-10*. Please read the passage silently and then have a member of your group read it aloud. I shall paraphrase the passage so you will not need to discuss what you have read.

12:50 Bible Study #5—In Small Groups

1:00 Reflection #5

Zacchaeus was a wee short little guy. He lived in the city of Jericho. Jericho is a wonderful little city and is the longest continuously inhabited city in the world! It has been a kind of stagecoach stop for many centuries. It is the only reasonable pass through the barren mountains from modern day Jordan to Jerusalem and is guarded on the east by the city of Jericho. Those who make the long trek from the Sinai, or from the wilderness in Jordan, on their way to Jerusalem, stopped in Jericho in order to be refreshed and to

renew theft supplies. Those about to start out on a journey through Jordan also stopped in order to prepare for their trip. News and gossip are shared, goods bought and sold and taxes collected.

One day the people of Jericho heard that the now famous preacher, teacher and healer, Jesus, was coming their way. He would be passing through their city on his way to Jerusalem. Nearly everyone wanted to see him. The citizens of Jericho lined the streets, much as we do today for a parade. On the right hand side of the street stood the Roman citizens and officials. They, of course, would not mix with the Jews, for the Jews were the occupied people and considered second-class people. On the other side of the street the Jews stood with their rabbis, scribes and president of the synagogue.

Now consider poor Zacchaeus. He collected taxes for Rome, so he might want to stand with the Romans. But he was also a Jew. The Jews would not want him to stand with them since he collected taxes and the Romans would not let him stand with them because he was Jewish. He could stand at the very end of the street, but then the prophet Jesus would notice him and realize he was outcast, ostracized, a sinner. What was he to do?

Zacchaeus decided he would climb up a tree. Neither the Romans nor the Jews would even know he was there and from the tree he could see Jesus, but not be seen by him. After a bit Jesus entered Jericho and walked down the street. The Romans waved and shouted to him. The Jews too, waved and shouted, but Jesus paid no attention to them. When Jesus came to the tree in which Zacchaeus was hiding, he stopped dead in his tracks and said, "Zacchaeus, come down!"

Now we need to stop in the story for just a moment. The customs of hospitality in the first century, in Jericho, were not the same as they are for us today. To understand the story, we need to remember that. Today if you really like someone, if you want to get to know him or her better, you invite that person to your house for dinner. It is a risky thing to do, since that person may not be willing to come.

In the first century, it was the other way around. If you liked someone, or wanted to get to know him or her better, you would invite yourself to his or her house for dinner. By doing so, you make three statements: 1) I want to be with you, 2) I believe that God has blessed you with adequate resources to provide a meal, and 3) I trust you not to poison me!

Now back to the story. Jesus came to a stop just below the tree in which Zacchaeus was hiding. He looked up and said, "Zacchaeus, come down". What did the crowd say? "What is Jesus, doing, talking to that sinner?" Note the crowd did not say, what is he doing talking to Zacchaeus, but rather what is he doing talking to a sinner? Jesus, on the other hand, called Zacchaeus by name, Zacchaeus come down.

Jesus said to Zacchaeus, "I want to come to your house for dinner tonight". Jesus, following the custom of his day, wanted to spend time with Zacchaeus, he wanted to get to know him better, to be his friend. And what did Zacchaeus do? He came down from the tree, received Jesus joyfully and said, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I will give

to the poor and if I have defrauded any one of anything, I will restore it fourfold". In my mind's eye, I see Zacchaeus running down the street in order to prepare a meal for Jesus.

Did you notice that the only words we have in the entire bible from Zacchaeus have to do with how he will manage his money! After Jesus calls him by name and said that he wanted to be with him, Zacchaeus' whole life is changed.

Zacchaeus' story is our story. We sometimes see ourselves as sinners, sometimes we think the world around us considers us to be unclean and we sometimes want to hide from Jesus. But in our Baptism, Jesus calls us by name; we are sinners no more, but rather ones known by God by name, forever. Each time we gather for Holy Eucharist, Jesus says to us, I want to come to your house for dinner, he wants to be with us, to get to know us better, to be our friend.

Like Zacchaeus, we may change how we manage our money. To do so, we need a prudent plan. In order to create that plan, I would like you to consider this little letter to God.

1:15 Hand out the Letter To God (*see below*)

Please work alone for a few minutes and in prayer try to complete the Letter to God. This is a personal and confidential exercise. I will not ask you to share any part of this exercise. We will re-convene here at 1:30.

1:30 Re-convene as a group - Reflection #6

The Letter to God that you have just completed is yours to keep. I'll not ask you to share it with anyone. But I do ask that from time to time you get it out and read it again. Perhaps you will want to make some adjustments, or you may need a reminder of the promise you have made.

As you consider how you will manage the money God has placed in your care, you will need to make two important decisions. First, what portion of all that you have will you give to God and God's work? Second, where is God's work being done? For many of us, God's work is being done best in and through our own congregation, but not all of God's work is being done there. There may be a charity that is doing God's work too. Of all that I will give to God and God's work, what portion will go to my home church and what portion will go to charity? Remember, in the story from Malachi, offerings above and beyond the tithe were given as charity. Your plan may need to be in two phases. Phase one helps you to move to tithe to God and God's work; phase two helps you tithe directly to your church and then give an additional portion of your money to charities.

2:00 Celebrate Holy Eucharist

(For Propers: Use Ps. 67; 1549:5-13, Eph. 3:1-12 and Malt. 28:16-20)

The Letter To God

Dear God:

Right now I give to You and your work ___% of all that I have.

In five years I will give ____% of all that I have to you and to Your work.

In order to reach that goal, I will give:

_____ % Next year

_____ % The following year

_____ % The following year and

_____ % The following year

Your loving child,

(Sign your name)

NARRATIVE BUDGET

Part One

The narrative budget tells the story of the mission and ministry of your congregation. It is not a list of bills paid, disbursements or planned future expenses. The narrative budget views all expenditures as ones that enable the work of God's people in and through the local congregation. The cost of electricity, for instance, is what provides lighted and climate controlled space for education, worship, pastoral care, and a host of other unique ministries.

There are four steps required to complete a narrative budget:

1. Retrieve the materials produced in the planning stage of the leadership conference and the leadership retreat (see pp.13).

2. With the leadership team, arrange the current ministries of which you are most proud, and the ones you feel most called to do, into one of five categories, Service (outreach), Worship, Education, Evangelism, or Pastoral Care (including both care giving and fellowship). This exercise can become overly complex. To avoid long discussions, allow some duplication and some rather arbitrary placement. When this same exercise is repeated over several years the placement of ministries will become both easier and more obvious.

THIS DOCUMENT BECOMES PART 1 OF THE NARRATIVE BUDGET

3. The Vestry (and other leaders if desired) gathers and determines the relative importance of each of the five categories. Although, in theory each is equally important, it is far wiser to set a different priority for each category based on the needs of the congregation and community for the coming year. Use a percentage to illustrate the priority (for instance, 25% for Service, 20% for Worship, 25% for Education, 15% for Evangelism, 15% for Pastoral Care).

4. The vestry, with the Treasurer and Finance Committee, determines the minimum fixed (that is contractual or morally binding agreements) expenses required to maintain the congregations existence. Apply the same percentages determined in step three to the total of the fixed expenses (see below).

THIS DOCUMENT BECOMES PART 2 OF THE NARRATIVE BUDGET.

When this is completed, publish this narrative budget and distribute throughout the parish.

NARRATIVE BUDGET

Part Two

(INSERT STATEMENT OF UNIQUE MINISTRY)

% Service (Our ministry to those at risk and not a part of our congregation) (List examples: i.e. Transient workers, International mission, food pantries, etc.)

% Worship (our ministry of Prayer and Sacrament) (List examples i.e. Sunday morning services, weekday services, Holy Day Services, worship aids (flowers, bulletins, inserts, support for Lay Eucharistic Ministers, Choir, acolytes, etc.)

% Education (Our ministry of teaching the content of the Christian Faith: Church School class for all ages, special programs, Discovery Weekend, Vacation Bible School, etc.)

% Evangelism (Our ministry of proclaiming the Good News of God in Christ and of the faithful; life of the congregation: i.e. Media advertising, ministries to newcomers, ministries of incorporation, special events intended to make the ministry of the

congregation known in the community (concert series, floats in Fourth of July parades etc.)

% Pastoral Care (Our ministry of caring for those within the congregation including both “care giving” and fellowship: i.e. Ministries to shut-ins, those in the hospital, those at home in recovery, prayer groups and prayer chains, parish picnics, potluck dinners, “supper clubs”, etc).

SIX WEEK VIDEO SERIES

For Year A (first year in a three year cycle) use “Curing Affluenza” available from The Resource Center of Florida-Bahamas Synod, ELCA 813-876-7660 ext. 29 or ireneF@FBSnod.org.

- Week one: An Abundant Life: What is it?
- Week two: Money: How poor does Jesus want us to be
- Week three: Time: How much do I give away?
- Week four: Stuff: How much can I have?
- Week five: Support: What will I get?
- Week six: What do I do come Monday morning?

For Year B (second year in three year cycle) use “Jesus Calls Us” available from TENS 800-699- 2669 or TENSTENS.org.

For Year C (third year in three year cycle) use “Why is It Always about Money?” available from TENS 800-699-2669 or tens@tens.org.

Also consider using: *The Lord’s Prayer* and *Loose Connections* also available from TENS 800- 699-2669 or www.tenstens.org.

TIME WORKSHOP

Part One

In his little book *Three Mile An Hour God*, Koyama suggests that the people of the Exodus lived in a world not unlike ours. They were in a world of transition. They were led into the wilderness, “the place where we are face to face with danger and promise.” For forty years they wandered the wilderness. They sought direction, a new order for the life they would live under God. For the people of the Exodus, the need to rediscover dependence on God was critical. They were taught slowly. “Love has.. .an inner speed. . . a spiritual speed. It is different.. .from the technological speed to which we are accustomed. It goes on in the depth of our life, whether we notice or not... at three miles an hour. It is the speed we walk and therefore it is the speed the love of God walks. God walks ‘slowly’ because he is love. If he is not love he would have gone much faster. The people of God were taught... as they walked three miles an hour by the three mile an hour God.” (Kosuke Koyama, *The Three Mile An Hour God*, Maryknoll, N. Y.: Orbis Books, 1979, p7).

The first people of the wilderness carried the Ark of the Covenant, the container for the stone tablets upon which were written the laws delivered to Moses. It became a symbol of the relationship of the love they had with God. As they carried the ark they grew in love with God and one another. God guided them with pillars of cloud and smoke as they walked through the wilderness seeking a promised land.

We are the new people of the wilderness, people living in a time in which danger and promise have, once again, come together. We are on a journey through uncharted wilderness. We, too, shall walk slowly, at three miles an hour. We search for hidden treasure. Our destination is nothing short of the Kingdom of Heaven (*Matt 13:14*).

As we contemplate our trip, a quick check of our inventory may prove helpful. We take with us a new kind of Ark of the New Covenant. We carry it in our hearts and confess it in the Baptismal Covenant. We believe that we need to continue in the apostle’s teaching, studying Holy Scripture in order that our own lives be more consistent with its imperatives.

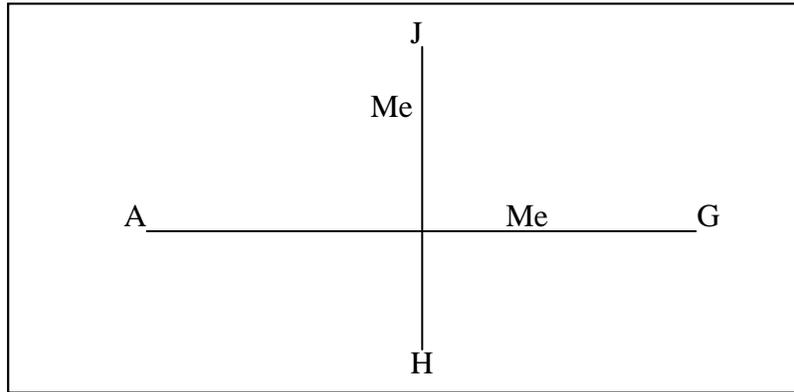
We believe that we need to remain in the apostles' fellowship, preserving the historic Christian faith and actively participating with other Christians in a faithful life and witness. We need to participate regularly in the celebration of our Lord's life, death and resurrection through the Holy Eucharist or "the breaking of bread". We also need regular conversation with God in private prayer. We want to manage our time so that we "come together week by week for corporate worship," and so that time is intentionally set aside for repentance, thanksgiving, proclamation, and works of justice, charity, and mercy. We would like to manage our time so that it is used for the "spread of the Kingdom of God." As we carry this Ark of the New Covenant, we must walk slowly and be taught slowly just like the first wilderness people. We would like our lives shaped by the New Covenant, but if we make haste we will lose our way. Our maps are old and must be redrawn.

Some few have found their way in the wilderness with little more than the Baptismal covenant as their guide. They have been called to a special ministry and style of life, which enables them to devote nearly all their time to worship, prayer, study and acts of mercy. Those who have entered monastic orders are the primary example, but there are occasionally others (especially those who are retired) who, without the support of a monastic community, have done the same. Most of us, however, are not called to devote all of our time exclusively to study, prayer, and worship. Our calling is to a ministry in the world. We are "sent" people whose purpose is to transform the world.

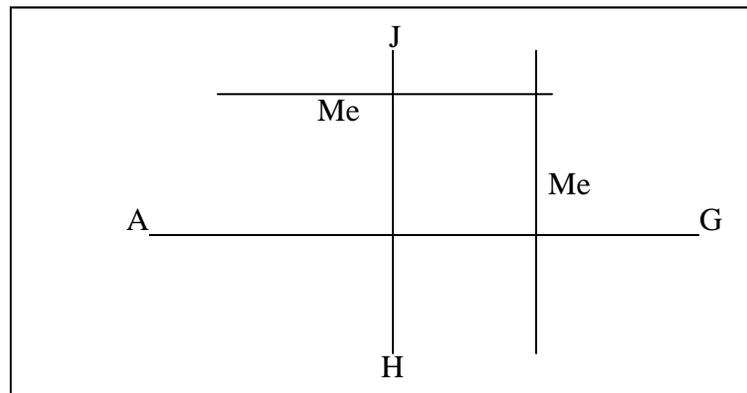
But the world in which we live is vastly more complex than it was even fifty years ago. As we gather information more rapidly, we have become more aware of world affairs. It is to these events that we are called to respond. We live in a fast-paced, transitional time, a time filled with great danger and equally great promise. The great advances in health care, for instance, have prolonged our lives and perhaps enhanced our quality as well, but advances have far outpaced our ability to provide an ethical framework for the use of those advances. Our use of nuclear energy has vastly improved the quality of our lives in some areas, but at the same time has placed in extreme danger the continuation of life, as we know it. Institutions, which once served as guardians of our values, and custodians for the fabric of our lives, are also in chaos. Neither our contemporary technology nor the traditional support of our institutions have provided us with the maps we need for our wilderness journey, a journey that calls us to be effective managers of our time.

Our journey begins with a hunger for intimacy, which includes our unabated appetite for more meaningful relationships; we find that we know less about how to use that time. All of us need to spend time alone and time with family, friends, or groups of people. Since we are unique, the amount of time each of us needs in any relationship will vary greatly.

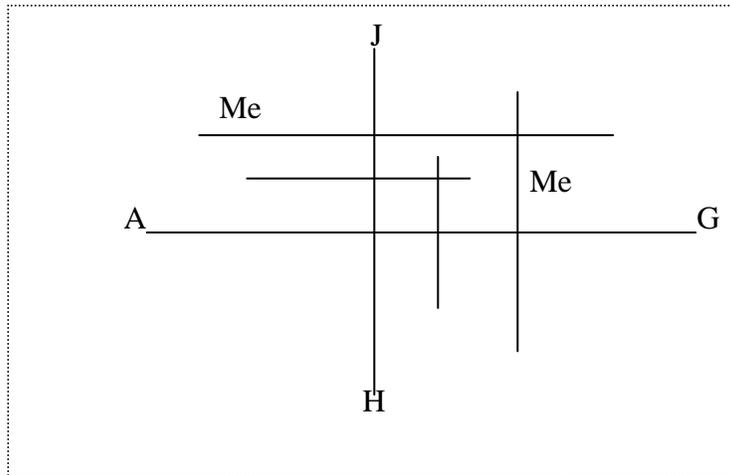
As we begin our journey through this period of change we need to prepare maps to bring some order out of our chaos. As a first step in your map preparation, draw a horizontal line in the middle of a blank sheet of paper. It can serve as a continuum, a symbolic description of one of the ways you use your time. At the far left place an A. It represents the extreme form of being alone. If you were to use your time this way, you would never



Next draw a horizontal line through those initials, all the way through the vertical line, which represents the job-human relationships continuum. Be sure it extends in both directions. Now relocate your initials on the alone-group continuum, and draw a vertical line through those initials in both directions. Be sure that the new vertical line and the new horizontal lines intersect. The intersection of these two lines is your current balance.



If the spot you have initialed on the alone-group line does not represent the balance you would like to have between time alone and time with friends, draw a vertical dotted line at the place you would like to be. If the second place you have marked your initials does not represent the balance you like between job and human relationships, draw a new horizontal dotted line at the place you would like to be. The point at which these two dotted lines meet is the place, which represents the new balance you would like to strike for use of your time. It is your desired balance.



In order to change, to move from the current to the desired balance, we must first recognize our human needs, which we experience at distinct levels common to all people. These include our need for physical-well being, safety or security, esteem, love and self-actualization. The successful satisfaction of each level of need enables us to seek a response to the next; but not to satisfy any level of need will inhibit our ability to move beyond that need and become the person we can be; we can describe this as a hierarchy of needs.

For the purpose of illustration, imagine you are suddenly alone in a jungle. Within a very short time, you would become aware of your need for food, water, and shelter. That is obviously your first level of need. Until you have an adequate supply of food and water, you will take increasingly greater risks to get them. Once those needs have been assured, you would want to protect yourself and the resources you have gathered for your physical well being. You will want to protect yourself and your cache from wild animals and natural disaster. That is your second level of need: safety or security. Next, you will want to make sure that other people in the jungle do not attack you, but rather become friendly toward you; esteem is your third level of need. Then you will want to care for the people around you, to express your love for them; this is your next level of need: love. Finally, you will have a dream, a vision of who you could be, what you could do, if you were to reach your full potential. The vision is called self-actualization and is the highest level of need.

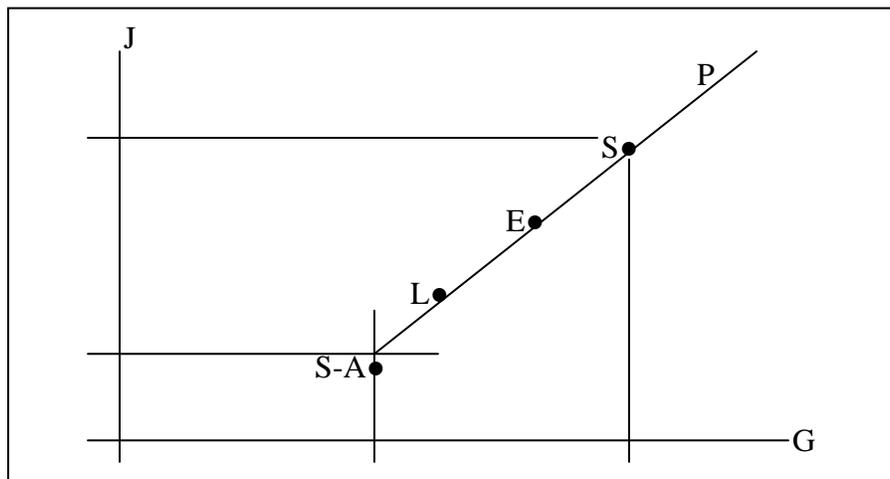
Few contemporary Americans have experienced the jungle; nevertheless, all these needs are still apparent. Most of us shop for groceries, purchase clothing for warmth, exercise regularly, and have regular physical and dental check-ups (physical well-being). We generally have more than one days supply of food in our pantries, lock our houses and cars, purchase health and life insurance, open savings accounts, and invest in IRAs, CDs, and pension programs (safety and security). We generally join social and service organizations, and offer charitable service (esteem); seek and maintain friendships and enjoy our families (love); and set personal goals, develop hobbies, and pursue a career

(self-actualization).

Our responses to each of these levels of needs, however, are not always intentional. Sometimes we simply fall into a particular response, or by habit, experience, family tradition, or cultural conditioning, accept certain responses as if they were the only ones available. Not too long ago, for instance, the sons and grandsons of coal miners or auto workers expected to continue the family tradition in those trades; tacos were eaten only by Mexicans and Americans in the Southwest; and personal savings were hidden in the mattress or cookie jar out of fear for another stock market crash.

Our desired balance, if it is to be intentional and informed, must recognize our levels of needs, and must allow us to move through each level with full awareness of the alternatives available to us. If we are to approach our desired balance, then we must expect to pass through each level of need until we have within our sight the dream, the vision, which excites us and enables us to approach self-actualization.

Return now to the chart you have made representing your current and desired balance. Find again your current balance. Notice the quadrant of the page in which you have placed it. Now out in the corner of the page nearest your current balance place a P (representing physical well-being). Draw a line from the P through your current balance to your desired balance. Place an S-A (which represents self-actualization) at the point where you marked your desired balance. Divide the line between the P and S-A into four equal segments. At the first mark, place an S (safety); at the second place an E (esteem), and at the third mark place an L (love).



You have now prepared the first map for your stewardship journey. If you look closely, you will find that the route you have just drawn ends, in effect, at a cross - the intersection of lines at your desired balance. That symbol is not accidental. The cross is at the center of our stewardship journey. As we seek a fuller and more meaningful life, we move closer and closer to the cross. The last line you have drawn leads along a path from physical well being to self-actualization. You may wish to adjust the amount of

time you devote to tasks and friendship, to being alone and with groups, for the more we approach self-actualization, the more we live in the manner intended for us by God. As we approach self-actualization, as we become more reflective of the image of God in each of us, and as we exercise more fully the purpose for which God intends us, not only are we more content with our own lives, but we are also more the divine-like creature intended by God.

The line you have drawn represents your path for the journey to the field in which hidden treasure is to be found. It is the path through the wilderness—and into the stewardship of time.

TIME WORKSHOP

Part Two

The most important gift God has given us is time. There is nothing we could do, no joy we could share, no activity we could complete, and no love to experience if there were no time given. One of the most important things we do is manage the time we have in ways that truly represent our values, our priorities, and our faith; but many of us manage our time poorly. We need time to work, to complete tasks and accomplish goals, and yet “nearly everyone senses that work alone is not sufficient for human fulfillment.” We also need time alone and with others. We find ourselves with an ever-increasing sense that there is not enough time. What many of us experience has been called OOC (Out of Control) syndrome. OOC’s are people who are terribly busy, have very little free time, and feel that a lot of the tasks they have to get done to manage their lives are not getting done at all”.² Others of us “have time on our hands,” “waste time,” have “time to kill,” or wonder, “where did the time go?” When we mismanage our time as a result of OOC syndrome or in the passively desperate act of “killing” time, we are suggesting that God did not create adequate time for all that must be done—or we are committing a mini-suicide.

Managing our time in such a way as to express fully our faith and our values is a stewardship question. If, indeed, stewardship is what we have, then stewardship of time is certainly one of our chief concerns. Moreover, the way we manage our time will reflect the faith and priorities of our lives.

Perhaps our first priority is to establish a Sabbath. “Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. For six days you shall labor and do all your work but the seventh day is a

Sabbath for Yahweh your God. You shall do no work that day, neither you nor your son nor your daughter nor your servants, men or women, nor your animals nor the stranger who lives with you. For in the six days Yahweh made the heavens and the earth and the sea and all that these hold, but on the seventh day he rested; that is why Yahweh has blessed the Sabbath day and made it sacred.” (*Exod. 20:8-11, JB*)

The Sabbath is time to recreate, to “re-create” before and with God, and time to rest from our labor and be renewed, time to rediscover our dependence on God. “Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day you shall have a holy Sabbath of solemn rest to the Lord, (*Exod. 35.2*). The Sabbath is the time to renew the covenant with God. It is time to discover new meaning and purpose for our lives.

“Buried deep in the Judeo-Christian tradition is a rhythm of time that needs to be uncovered and offered in fresh forms today. It is a rhythm anchored in an understanding of the Sabbath.” The Sabbath in Judeo-Christian tradition has been the seventh day of the week, the day after six days have been given to the normal activities of work. In the life of Israel, on the Sabbath day one was prohibited from engaging in any activity that could be considered work. Indeed, one of the major controversies between Jesus and his adversaries had to do with what could legitimately be done on the Sabbath day (*Matt. 12:1-14*). The Sabbath was to be a day set aside to “re-create” before God, to spend time in prayer, meditation, and those forms of recreation that would strengthen one’s ties to God. There were, of course, other special days set aside for particular religious observances, and many of these were like the Sabbath in their purpose; but it should be noted that only one day of the week was set aside as the Sabbath. With the development and acceptance of a calendar, what we now call Sunday was accepted as the first day of the week, and the day we now call Saturday was accepted as the seventh day. The Sabbath day for both Jews and Christians has traditionally been Saturday.

Gradually the influence of the Christian Church changed the western world-view of the Sabbath. Since it seemed particularly appropriate to honor the resurrection of Jesus with worship, study, and celebration, the first day of the week took on many of the characteristics of the seventh day. By the time of the Puritans, this view had become so well established that what amounted to two Sabbath days emerged.

Saturday, the seventh day, became the day for leisure activity, the day for work around the house and for volunteer work. Sunday, the Lord’s Day, became the day for prayer and worship. The labor movement supported this emerging view and, with the development of the fifty-hour (now forty-hour) workweek, solidified the desire for a two-day Sabbath.

In more recent times, as the influence of the Christian Church has waned, the desire for two or more days away from the normal activities of work has remained, but the use of that time has changed. Rather than use the time to re-create before God, our Sabbath day is being used for recreation or play. “One of the sad ironies of this situation is that, despite our intentions to allow a different quality of time in our lives, we often end up turning all our time into work time.” Our Sabbath day, when its unique purpose is lost, is

guided by the same competitive compulsion that drives our working world. What was once recreational golf is now friendly competition and the winner is paid the bet. “This drivenness is deepened by what sociologists call the rapid shift from ascribed to achieved status in modern societies: the shift from sensing a givenness to who we are through family, religion, and community membership, to defining ourselves (and being defined by others) in terms of what we produce through whatever individual way of life this production of self and things man involve.”

We have developed a life style that provides twice as much time for renewal, but, even with the comparatively vast amounts of time available for “re-creation,” few of us truly feel renewed, refreshed, or rested; and a deep hungering for spiritual wholeness, rest, and refreshment remains. A desire to be fed, to hear the comforting voice of an undemanding friend, to experience peace in our inner being remains unfulfilled. In times of great socioeconomic change, in moments of personal crisis, in a world of uncertainty, we need time for intentionally slowing down, for quiet moments in the midst of the hustle and bustle of our lives. It is in the quiet moments that we hear, “Be still and know that I am God.” (*Ps. 46:10*) It is here that we rediscover stability, meaning and wholeness.

To walk as slowly as the “three-mile-an-hour God” for those quiet moments in the midst of it all, we need to recapture the purpose of the Sabbath and then use that time in such a way as to reflect our values and priorities. The Sabbath is sacred time, time devoted to recreation before God and to works of justice, mercy, and love in order that the love of God be known and experienced by all people. For wholeness, we must recapture the purpose of the Sabbath and we must begin a bold internal revolution.

“Sabbath rest is such a revolutionary act. It defies the bound-ness of the workday world.”⁶ Sabbath rest sets limits on the amount of time we will give to the tasks that seem to control us. By setting aside time for ourselves, time with God in re-creation, we begin to take control again. It is the first step out of the OOC syndrome. It is an act of covenant that speaks clearly about our dependence in “everything that proceeds out of the mouth of God.”

Rest in the presence of God is only, a part of our Sabbath time, however. The Sabbath has two uses; re-creation and works of justice and mercy. In a new sociological era we may need a new way to approach the Sabbath, always remembering, “the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath (*Mark 2:27*). For the Sabbath to enable us to achieve some increased sense of wholeness, it must allow time for rest and work. The two uses of Sabbath time, then, must be divided into Sabbath rest and Sabbath work. As we prepare for our journey, the next step is to rediscover the purpose of the Sabbath and to give Sabbath rest and work their proper place in our lives.

Those who first came into covenant with God, the people of the Old Covenant, understood the purpose of the Sabbath. They recognized the call to the stewardship of time. They began by setting priorities. At least ten percent of their crop or herd, money and time were offered to God. That tithe was a minimum, not a maximum. It was not particularly virtuous to tithe, rather it was the least one could do and still be considered

one of the people of the covenant (*Mal. 3:8*). Offerings, which could amount to an additional 20 percent of one's life and labor, were expected from the truly faithful, righteous person.

The tithe was a sacramental symbol of the whole life and labor of the faithful. For a people in an agricultural era, it was hard to distinguish between time, talent and treasure. Almost all of the time of a shepherd was spent tending sheep and finding good pasturage, water, and protection from danger. The tithe was an outward and visible sign of faith, acknowledging one's dependence on God. It was truly a symbol for one's whole life and labor. From such an example, we might rediscover how to set priorities.

There are 168 hours in one week. Since sleep is essential for our health, and indeed, to maintain life, let us deduct 56 hours from each week for sleep (eight hours per day). If we were to tithe the remaining hours, we would set aside 11.2 hours per week. That time, if used as Sabbath rest, would suggest that God is of utmost importance to us. It is during our Sabbath rest that we slow down to three miles an hour; it is here that we learn slowly. Here we would recognize our need to be with God for recreation and renewal, to study Scripture and meditate upon its implications for our lives.

For some of us, the most convenient use of that time might be in one single, large block, all 11.2 hours in one day. For others of us, it might be more convenient to set aside some portion of each day as Sabbath rest, perhaps three hours on the first day of the week (Sunday) and then 1.3 hours on each remaining day of the week. Still others might prefer to set aside 6.2 hours on Sunday, 3.5 hours on the Judeo-Christian Sabbath (Saturday) and half an hour on each of the remaining days of the week. Others may find that it is best to set aside two 112 hour periods in a row, for a "weekend" retreat every second week.

Our Sabbath rest - the tithe of our time - is, of course, the minimum. Included in it will be some of the time we set aside for corporate worship, for private prayer, for Bible study, and for dialogue with others about God. Sabbath rest will at least symbolically allow us to make a response to our baptismal covenant: to "continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers." Our tithe of time can be retreat time. It is that part of our lives set aside for the strengthening and nurturing of our souls and our spirits. It is that quiet, that eye of the hurricane that will empower us for ministry. Sabbath rest will not, however, allow very many hours for works of justice and mercy. It is only the minimum amount of time we set aside for our covenant relationship with God. It does not allow sufficient time for our covenant with the people of God. This is additional time, our offerings of volunteer service. Those additional hours of volunteer time are our Sabbath work.

Volunteer time is Sabbath time for it is holy time, sacred time, time dedicated to those works of justice and charity, mercy and caring which reflect the image of God in us. This volunteer time is Sabbath work. It has as its end the glory of God, not personal gain. Often the tasks we do in our Sabbath work are similar to those we do at other times in our lives. For instance, a church schoolteacher may also be a public school teacher during

the week. As a church schoolteacher, however, someone is not normally paid for time and talent in the classroom. The skills and talents are similar, but the purpose is different. The plumber who repairs pipes at no charge for a widow uses his or her time in a holy way. A doctor who gives Sabbath work to a free clinic or offers free services to the poor uses the same skills and talents as those offered to paying patients, but the purpose is for the glory of God and not for profit. "As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me." (*Matt. 25:40*)

Our Sabbath time is holy and sacred. It is sacramental time: an outward and visible expression of the inward and spiritual grace we have received from God. It gives shape and meaning to the remaining time we have. That time is our time for ministry. Ministry is what we do each day, in all our activities. Ministry is that for which we are gifted and to which we are called. Ministry is not uniquely Christian. Humanitarians and those of non-Christian persuasions accomplish many good and worthwhile deeds. Ministry becomes Christian only as it reflects the covenant relationship we have rediscovered through our Sabbath time. We have divided Sabbath time into Sabbath rest and Sabbath work in order to distinguish between the two unique purposes of Sabbath time. As our first priority, we have set apart at least ten percent of our time for Sabbath rest and additional time (perhaps as much as an additional 20 percent) for Sabbath work.

With our first map in hand, our priority is clear, and with the speed of our journey now set, we are ready to take our first cautious steps. From time to time we will need to check our course. We may need to gather more information as we go. Certainly we will need to watch for additional road signs, but the way will become clear. We seek a hidden treasure, one buried in an unmarked field.

NOTES

1. Tilden Edwards, *Sabbath Time* (New York: Seabury Press, 1982), p. 4
2. Florence Skelly, quoted by Claudia Morain, "OOC! Are You Out of Control?" *The Springfield News-Sun* (Ohio), 2 September 1988
3. Edwards, *Sabbath Time*, Preface
4. *Ibid.*, p.3
5. *Ibid.*, p.4
6. *Ibid.*, p.43
7. Voltaire: "If you wish to destroy the Christian religion you must first destroy the Christian Sunday." Quoted by Binton Solberg in *Redeem the Time: The Puritan Sabbath in Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. Ix

TIME WORKSHOP

Part Three

There is a season for everything, a time for every occupation under heaven:

A time for giving birth,
a time for dying;
a time for planting,
a time for uprooting what has been planted.

A time for killing,
a time for healing;
a time for knocking down,
a time for building.

A time for tears,
a time for laughter;
a time for mourning,
a time for dancing.

A time for throwing stones away,
a time for gathering them up;
a time for embracing,
a time to refrain from embracing.

A time for searching,
a time for losing;
a time for keeping,
a time for throwing away.

A time for tearing,
a time for sewing;
a time for keeping silent,
a time for speaking.

A time for loving,
a time for hating;
a time for war,
a time for peace.
(*Eccles. 3:1-8*)

The list offered by the author of Ecclesiastes is not exhaustive, but illustrative. There are thousands of possible uses for our time. We simply cannot do all that is possible. The nearly infinite number of possibilities is overwhelming.

There is a contemporary parable that makes the point clearly.

A little clock was ticking away on the shelf; two ticks to the second as any good, self-respecting clock should tick. It began to think about how many times in the course of its life it was going to have to tick.

“Two ticks to a second means 120 ticks per minute.” It mused. “That’s 7200 ticks per hour, 172,800 ticks per day, 1,209,600 ticks per week for 52 weeks, and a total of 69,899,200 per year. Honors!” Straightway the clock had a nervous breakdown. The clock was taken to a psychiatrist, who patched up the mainspring as well as she could, then asked, “Clock, what’s your trouble?” “Oh doctor,” wailed the clock, “I have to tick so much. I have to tick two ticks to the second and 120 ticks per minute and 7200 ticks per hour and, “Hold it,” the psychiatrist cut in. “How many ticks do you tick at a time?” “Oh, I only just have to tick one at a time,” was the reply. “Then let me make a suggestion,” replied the doctor. “You go home and try ticking one tick at a time. Don’t even think about the next tick until it is time. Just tick one tick at a time. That you can do.”

There are so many possible uses for our time that we, like the clock, are overwhelmed. It is for this reason that when a child is asked: “What do you want to do today?” he or she responds by saying “I don’t know.” Even as adults, many of us respond to the nearly infinite choices before us by doing nothing and experiencing boredom, or by becoming frustrated by our attempts to do it all. A friend of mine once described our dilemma when he said, “We have a choice, it seems to me: we can rust out or wear out”. The list by the author of Ecclesiastes suggests a number of specific uses for our time simply in order to remind us of our need for prudent management and good stewardship of the gift

of time.

First, let's take the nearly infinite choices we have and arrange them into ten categories: (1) Sabbath rest, (2) Sabbath work, (3) sleep, (4) eating, meal preparation, and clean-up, (5) health, physical fitness, grooming, and hygiene, (6) continuing education, (7) leisure, hobbies, and play, (8) work or housekeeping, (9) commuting, travel, (10) home and car maintenance.

Of these categories, sleep is the one over which we have the least amount of conscious control. We must sleep in order to survive. Unless we are forced by some external stimuli to remain awake for extended periods of time, our bodies will involuntarily shut down. Most of us need to sleep between six to ten hours a day. It is reported that Albert Einstein slept an average of only four hours a day; certainly there are some who sleep more than ten hours per day; but most of us, who are in good health, sleep about eight hours per day. Assuming the average, then, approximately one third of the hours in any week are used for sleep (56 hours is 33.1 percent of 168 hours).

Eating, preparation, and clean up associated with it are also necessary for our survival. We must eat and drink fluids in order to live. We can voluntarily fast or abstain from food or drink for brief periods of time, but eventually our health will deteriorate and death will result without food and drink. How much time we give to these tasks is clearly one of personal preference, but time must be set-aside for them. Let us assume, however, that we have fast paced lives, and allow only a total of twenty minutes a day to eat (to get more, you'll have to cut in on your sleep allotment!); then we would need about 1.6 percent of each week for meals.

Some 35 percent of our week is time almost entirely beyond our control. Of the remaining 65 percent, we have already set aside at least 10 percent for Sabbath rest. This leaves 55 percent of our time, 109 hours, for our intentional management of time. Our journey through the wilderness to the field in which hidden treasure rests invites us to be stewards of those 109 hours. However, the map we drew in Part One is not adequate for this part of the journey. We must prepare a second map.

On a clean sheet of blank paper, make a chart with seven vertical columns and twenty-four lines down the side. Mark each column for one day of the week. Mark each line for each hour of the day, from 6:00 A.M. to 5:00 A.M.

Imagine a "normal week" in your life. Using the codes below, fill in each box with the code, which describes how you normally manage your time. If you spend time in more than one area during a given hour, then mark one in the first day and the other in the next and so alternate through the week.

SR	Sabbath rest
SW	Sabbath work
S	sleep
E	eating

H	health
CE	continuing education
P	leisure, play
W	work
CT	commuting
M	maintenance

When you have completed this first task, total the number of hours you devote to each of the ten categories. Dividing 168 into each total, calculate the percentage of this “normal” week you give to each category.

As you review this information, you will discover that an additional category is largely beyond your control: either work or maintenance (housekeeping). Unless you are unemployed or self-employed (including those who are engaged in housekeeping without pay), your employer determines the number of hours you will work. According to recent surveys, “People are working long hours”. We spend about 60 percent of our waking time on the job, a proportion trend-trackers say will grow even larger by 1990.² Your choices are either to find other employment, request more hours, or refuse to work overtime. Any of these three choices includes serious consequences. Those consequences, however, may be necessary as you consider the implications of what you have learned about how to manage your time. For those who are unemployed either as a result of retirement or because a satisfactory position is not currently available, and for those who are self employed, the work category is entirely under your control. Calculate what percentage of your week are the working hours beyond your control. As you reflect on this information, ask yourself if the percentage of time you give to work and the total amount of time beyond your control accurately reflects your values and expresses your priorities.

Still other categories involve areas that are under your control but in which you feel a personal obligation to use your time. These are areas you would describe as “essential to your well-being.” For instance, a jogger may be free to stop jogging, but so much well-being is involved in that activity, that not to jog would be unthinkable. Some people feel that their personal appearance requires special time for the grooming of hair, application of lotions and creams, and the selection of color-coordinated clothing. For those persons, appearance is critical to their sense of identity and to their well being. Calculate the percentage of your week, which is “essential to your well-being.”

If work and time “beyond your control” amounts to 50 hours per week, and that which you consider essential to your well-being amount to an additional 15 hours per week (a total of 65 hours or 38.7 percent), then your discretionary time is 44 hours per week or 26.9 percent. Those discretionary hours are the ones that will require special attention as you seek to manage time more effectively. Does the percentage of time devoted to Sabbath work, to continuing education, or to leisure adequately express your values?

Have you given more to one category than you thought you had? Less time? Does each category truly represent your personal priorities? If not; then recreate your hourly chart,

arranging your time in such a way as to express those values and priorities. The result will become the second map needed for our journey in stewardship.

Neither map can be used alone. However, the first, which shows how we manage our time alone and with others and the balance we seek between job and human relationships, is complimentary to the map which indicates how we use our time. In all of the things we do, it is possible that others are present with us, or absent from us. We can, for instance, wash dishes alone, with one other, or with several others. We may do so either to complete the task more quickly, or because we like having others around us. Compare the first map to the second. Are there times when you would like to include more people, times when you prefer fewer people? Are there tasks that have become more important than friendships you desire? What changes could you make so that your journey to hidden treasure more reflects the Kingdom of Heaven you seek?

NOTES

1. From "Pulpit Helps," AMO International, Chattanooga, TN, 37422
2. Florence Skelly, quoted by Claudia Morain, "OOC! Are You Out of Control?" *The Springfield News Sun* 2 September 1988

TIME WORKSHOP

Part Four

The journey of our stewardship of time engages us in what Richard Bolles describes as the three boxes of life: education, work, and leisure. He suggests that our lives have become compartmentalized. During the first third of our lives we are almost exclusively engaged in educational pursuits; during the second third of our lives, in work and career pursuits; and in the last third of our lives in the pursuit of leisure. In the extreme, some rarely pursue education, reading little more than the newspaper or an occasional magazine after they have graduated from school. During our years of employment, we rarely allow adequate time for leisure (our vacations are too often spent in doing necessary household tasks). In our years of retirement, we rarely seek full-time employment, nor do we seek formal education.

Although those boxes are, in part, beyond our control, we can remove some of the rigidity of their boundaries. Certainly we need basic education before we can enter the job market, but we can continue to learn throughout the balance of our lives. Several years ago I met a lady who at sixty-six was beginning her Masters degree in journalism. I have a friend who, in his late seventies, continues to take sophisticated religious education courses each semester. The purpose of education is not limited to marketable knowledge. Rather, education broadens us, invites us to explore unfamiliar territory, to improve some part of our lives, and it can entertain us as well. To paraphrase a popular

commercial, “We never outgrow our need for education.”

While it is true that we need education and experience, and physical stature and strength in order to do certain kinds of work, it is not true that there is a time (except in very early childhood) when we are unable to work. Rather, we may need to modify the amount and kind of work we do. Children do errands, baby-sit, mow grass, and do other jobs for pay that are appropriate to their age and experience. Different jobs for pay become possibilities for us. Our knowledge and experience have value which increases with age. Our work may change to that of a consultant or advisor if the physical demands of one job become excessive, but our ability to make a meaningful contribution is limited only by our willingness to offer our time and ability.

Leisure time and time for recreation, are more plentiful in our youth, perhaps, but we can, and indeed must, provide leisure in our lives. We remember the old saying, “All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.” This truth is becoming even more apparent as we see increasing signs of stress and stress related illnesses. Without play, our imaginations are dulled, creative energy is sapped, and ultimately our productivity diminished.

There is one caution, however, as we consider our leisure time. The authors of the Declaration of Independence recognized, at least by implication, that happiness is to be pursued, not received. For recreation or play to bring happiness into our lives, they cannot become ends in themselves. Happiness is to be sought by us, not delivered to us. Entertainment has its places, and all of us need to be entertained occasionally. However, if our leisure is too dominated by entertainment then our desire to consume will become insatiable. Either we will be continually seeking the next exciting form of entertainment, and generally be disappointed, or we will become embittered. We will believe that there is nothing worth doing, nothing at the show worth watching, and in frustration we will feel cheated, neglected, or unsatisfied with the life we have.

To find our way to hidden treasure, we need a third map, one that will help us balance more effectively our education, work and leisure.

For this map, take a sheet of blank paper and draw a single horizontal line across the middle of the page. Mask the far left end with the date of your birth. On the right draw an arrow to indicate that your life is not yet complete.

Now place today’s date at a place that represents how much of your life you have lived and shows how much you anticipate yet to live. Add marks, which indicate the year(s) of your graduation(s) from school and the projected year of your retirement from full-time employment.

In the law of the Old Covenant, each seventh year was a Sabbath year (*Lev. 25:4*). During that year, the land was to lie fallow, and the farmer and his household were to rest. It was “a Sabbath to the Lord.” There is no clear reference for how one was to use the seventh year, but clearly it was not for the normal activities of work and was set aside as holy

time.

We also know that, in the Old Covenant, each fiftieth year was a jubilee year (*Lev. 25:8*). Like the Sabbath year, this year was set aside as holy. Families were reunited with one another and with their ancestral homes. Again, we are not certain how the time was used, but clearly one could not work in the jubilee year. It was a time for festivities, and the normal course of affairs was prohibited.

Return to your personal time line and make a vertical mark to represent each seventh year along the whole length of the line. Note this as the Sabbath years. Then with a slightly larger vertical line mark your fiftieth year on the line. Note this as the jubilee year. Now look carefully at your personal time line. When is the next Sabbath year for you? It is unlikely that you can take a full year off from work, but it may be possible for you to set aside a substantial amount of time for re-creation with God and with the people of God.

Consider how many days per year you can use your own discretion, days such as “personal days,” legal holidays and vacation days. If your employer will permit the carry-over of those days from year to year, decide how many each year you must have for annual Sabbath time and how many you would be willing to postpone until your Sabbath year. Negotiate with your employer and determine if you can set aside a larger than normal amount of time every seventh year for your Sabbath year. If your employer will not permit you to carry over accumulated time, consider how in each year, you can set aside a mini- Sabbath: time in addition to your regular vacation that will allow for some more extended re-creation time.

Look again at your personal time line. When will your jubilee year occur? What might you do to mark this important year in your life? If it has already occurred, perhaps you could celebrate your jubilee on the next Sabbath year. By planning to use some of your accumulated discretionary time you can take a more extended and relaxed vacation, or offer volunteer service through the Peace Corps or one of the variety of church agencies, which specialize in mission work.

Look for a third time at your personal time line. Compare it to the second map you prepared. How much time did you allow for education, leisure, and work in that map? Does the amount of time you have allowed encourage or discourage the compartmentalization suggested by the “three boxes of life”? Where along your personal time line could you make the kind of life changes that would make the ratio more satisfactory?

To be a steward of time allows us to reflect on our management of the time we have, to provide for ourselves time with God, time alone, and time with others. It allows us to reflect on our continuing and constant need for education, work, and leisure. To be an intentional steward of time is to engage a revolutionary act, to rebel against the chaotic forces of change, which, if unchecked, will rob us of **our** full humanity.

NOTES

1. For a fuller treatment of this matter, see Richard N. Bolles, *The Three Boxes of Life* (Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press, 1981)

TALENT WORKSHOP

Part One

For contemporary Americans, the stewardship of talent is perhaps the most difficult task before us. We are a people who have been dominated by the work ethic, have rewarded productive labor and have strived for increasing economic affluence. We have been largely successful. As a nation we enjoy one of the highest standards of living in the world. By giving great value to the knowledge and skills required by business and industry we have substantially reduced the toil of labor. We have also dramatically increased the quality of our products and the efficiency of their production.

We have paid a dear price for that success. We have devalued the knowledge, skills, gifts and talents that do not result in a greater profit for either the corporation or the family unit of which we are a part. Not long ago fewer students were seeking degrees in the humanities and fewer were choosing careers in teaching, nursing or the other human service industries where the compensation is significantly lower than in other careers. As we have become more affluent in material well being, we have also become increasingly victimized by psychological, emotional and spiritual afflictions. The number of homeless persons and unemployed persons, the number of marriages which end in divorce, the number of teen suicides and pregnancies and the rising consumption of additive substances are but symptoms of those afflictions. Things have become more important than people, products more important than relationships, affluence more important than wholeness.

As a result, we have come to believe that the only talents are those for which someone else is willing to pay a price and that the more someone else will pay the more valuable is the talent. We have come to believe that the most important talents are those, which produce great material gain. Few of us believe that we have enough of the “good things

in life.” At the unconscious level, we believe that we must not be very good, that we don’t measure up and that we have few if any valuable talents. That belief has been reinforced in three important but vastly different ways.

Historically, the first is the distorted theological view, which suggests that we are totally depraved, without merit, unworthy and miserable wretches. It is, of course, true that we do wretched things, that as a result of our abuse of the gift of freedom we have woven untrustworthy, that we cannot “earn our salvation.” But it is not true that we are without worth. Beginning as early as the fourth century, some theologians have taught that we are the product of original sin. Such a view is lacking in the creation stories of Genesis.¹ Nevertheless, those theologians who have based their theology on the concept of original sin teach that, as a result of the sin of Adam, all people by their very nature are depraved, that there is nothing we can do that is of worth or merit.

However, in the Book of Exodus we read of a tribesman of Judah that God “filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability, with intelligence, with knowledge and with the craftsmanship . . . and he has inspired him to teach.” (*Exodus. 35:30, 34*). Saint Paul does suggest the possibility that we are unworthy as a result of original sin (*Rom. 5:12-21*).

He also recognized that “to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, God will give eternal life” (*Rom. 2:7*). Saint Paul’s personal struggle, his particular faith journey, focused in part on the relationship between the law and righteousness. His letters reflect his journey as he sought to teach the congregations of new Christians to whom he wrote. His emphasis in those letters provided a primitive theological framework for the early church, but certainly not the exclusive framework. Rather, as Saint Paul tried to reconcile freedom and our abuse of freedom, spirit and flesh, he used a variety of images in order to state his case.² Some of those images were lost for time, others gained prominence. We are now rediscovering that we are the good, talented and trusted stewards of creation who have the awesome gift and responsibility of freedom.

We believe that as part of creation we are made good—very good (*Gen. 1:31*). We are so precious and of such great worth that God sacrificed his Son for us. With his life, Jesus ransomed many; he calls us friends and family; we are called heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. As a result of the gift of faith, we are made a new people, saved, redeemed, made worthy. “Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar?” You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by works, and scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness”: and he was called the friend of God. You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone ... for as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so faith apart from works is dead” (*James 2:21-26*).

Although the mistaken view called original sin continues to haunt the recesses of our minds and to echo from some pulpits, we are beginning to recognize the more important paradoxical relationship between faith and works. Nevertheless, the distorted view rising

from the doctrine of original sin has been preached so often and by so many, that it has become an accepted understanding of the human condition by many believing and non-believing Americans.

The second negative influence on our belief about our talents is advertising. Advertising is a necessary and important form of communication. Through truthful advertising we can gather brands of the same basic product. However, what is most certainly an unconscious result of advertising is the view that we don't measure up. For instance, there are ten or more different brands of deodorant. Each through its advertising suggests that unless we use that particular brand of deodorant, we all "stink. The same could be said for laundry detergents; we all have dingy clothes, or "ring around the collar. " Moreover, the prices of many products are reduced through sales, which are advertised through the media. Time and time again, it seems we bought our product just one day before the sale. We feel guilty for not having saved money. And since so many advertisements indirectly suggest that the purchase of their product will make us younger, sexier, happier and more appealing, when we do purchase that product we are unconsciously convinced that we are old, unappealing, miserable wretches.

The third major influence on our devaluation of our talent has been a recent shift in business management. Until recently, many businesses were privately owned. A single family, or a small group of friends, all living in or near the community in which their business was located, directed the affairs of that business. The owners were directly involved in community affairs and were personally concerned for their employees. Owners provided housing, company stores, hospitals and recreational facilities for their employees. They gave generously to their church, the community chest, the arts and public welfare assistance programs. Although some employers took unfair advantage of their employees, many felt a genuine concern for the people of their community. Employees and their families for several generations responded with loyalty to the company and with hard work at their jobs. Generation after generation worked in the same plant, mill or mine. The loyalty and hard work of employees resulted in job security and strong, close-knit communities where relocation and mobility were at a minimum.

In more recent times ownership has changed from private to public. Many unrelated people now hold stock in the company. Frequently owners neither live in nor express great concern for the community in which their factories or plants are located. They are much more willing to dismiss employees or to require their relocation. The employees' loyalty and their experience, their hard work and their devotion to the company are no longer rewarded. Employees have lost their jobs or have been relocated as a result of plant closings or corporate mergers. They have been replaced by cheaper labor or by robots. As a result, employees have increasing difficulty believing that they are of any real value.

The clear impression we are receiving from the world around us is that we are untalented or that our talents are of so little value that it is fruitless to manage them effectively. If we carry that attitude in our hearts and minds, then our journey in the wilderness is surely

one that will end simply in fatigue. We cannot carry both the Ark of the New Covenant and that heavy load at the same time. If we try, the hidden treasure we seek will remain buried under the rubble of a cruel and hopeless world in chaos.

If, in our stewardship journey, we are to find hidden treasure, we need to rediscover our talents and become more convinced that we are indeed gifted and talented.

NOTES

1. Matthew Fox, *Original Blessing* (Santa Fe: Bear and Company, 1983), p. 47.
2. See Romans 9:21 (the clay and the potter), 10:12 (Jews and Gentiles) and 11:24 (grafting trees).

TALENT WORKSHOP

Part Two

We are a talented people, yet few of us believe we are truly blessed. In workshops repeated a number of times across the country, participants were asked to list their gifts or talents. The average number of gifts listed was five, most of which were related to music or sports. When asked to list their weaknesses, the average number was twenty-five. In the same workshops, participants were asked to list the gifts and weaknesses they saw in the other participants. There was an average of twenty-five gifts and only five weaknesses listed for each participant! Others see our gifts more clearly than we see our own. The weaknesses we believe we have are more imagined than real. Paul Tournier reminds us, “We cannot give that which we have not received.” It is equally true that we cannot give that which we do not believe we have.

“Now there are a variety of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (*1 Cor.12:4-7*).

We believe that we are made in the image of God and that God the Holy Spirit has given us a variety of talents or gifts. As we use the talents given us, we will become the creatures God intended us to be. However, the more we focus on what we are not, the gifts we do not have, the less we will be able to enjoy what has been entrusted to us. We are not to seek after the gifts we do not have. To do so would be to suggest that God doesn’t know what we need or what the world needs. Rather, the gifts given by God to the church in their nearly infinite variety are meant to be complimentary, and when effectively, they are for the common good, “for the equipment of the saints, for the work of ministry, building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and knowledge of the Son of God” (*Eph. 4:12-12*). Each of us has some gifts, and yet no two

of us exercise them in exactly the same way. Others have received gifts we don't have. As we learn not to be jealous, and to share what we have with one another, we can become more willing to rejoice in our own gifts, celebrate them, and offer them to God and the people of God.

The gifts given to us by God are accepted and acknowledged at our baptism and exercised in our various ministries. The list of gifts in Scripture is not exhaustive. There are many more which are implied through the virtuous lives of the biblical heroes and the saints of the Church. Athletic skills are implied, as cited in the second letter of Paul to Timothy, and musical gifts are implied in the Psalms (*Ps. 92, 95, 96, 98*). All of us receive some of the gifts of the Holy Spirit as listed in the New Testament, and in addition, may receive some of those implied elsewhere in Scripture.

Below is a partial listing of the gifts in the New Testament and suggested definitions for each. How we define these gifts may vary from time to time. As you review this list, you may wish to change slightly the meaning given for any gift or talent. You may also add other gifts inadvertently omitted.

A Partial List of Spiritual Gifts:

Preaching (utterance) with wisdom (*1 Cor. 12:8*)

- the ability to proclaim the gospel's implication for contemporary society
- the *gift* of preaching the central Christian truths about God

Preaching for instruction (utterance of knowledge) (*1 Cor. 12:8*)

- the ability to teach the contents of the gospel

Faith (*1 Cor. 12:9*)

- commitment in spite of evidence that would produce doubt
- belief in that which we cannot see

Healing (*1 Cor. 12:9*)

- the ability to make manifest God's healing power

Power of Miracles (*1 Cor. 12:10*)

- the ability to identify the mysterious and unexpected acts of God in human history

Prophecy (*1 Cor. 12:10*)

- the ability to discern the likely course of human history and anticipate the mighty acts of God

Recognizing Spirits (to distinguish between spirits) (*1 Cor. 12:10*)

- the ability to distinguish between, to "name" good and evil

Gifts of Tongues (*1 Cor. 12:10*)

- the ability to spontaneously speak in a language unknown to the speaker

Gift of ability to interpret tongues (*1 Cor. 12:10*)

- the ability to understand spontaneously a language unknown to the hearer

Administration or Service (*Rom. 12:7*)

- the ability to delegate tasks in order that God's will be done

Teaching (*Rom. 12:7*)

- the ability to convey information so that it is understood and assimilated by others

Exhortation or Preaching (*Rom. 12:8*)

- to call others to repentance with compassion

Almsgiving or one who contributes (*Rom. 12:8*)

- those who give substantially more than a tithe of money to God and God's work
- those of significant affluence who give with generosity

Aid-Giving (*Rom. 12:8*)

- the ability to seek and serve all people willingly and happily

Gift of Mercy (*Rom. 12:8*)

- the ability to bring hope, peace and joy into adversity
- the ability to judge with compassion and humility

Love (*Gal 5:22, 1 Cor. (12)*)

- the capacity to seek and serve Christ in all creation:

Agape — to offer oneself willingly and completely for the sake of another person without the — expectation of reward or return;

Philia — to willingly and unselfishly risk mutual sharing with another person;

Eros — to willingly express affection for another person;

Storge — to willingly provide or care for another — even for pets - from one's abundance.

Compassion (*Heb. 10-34, 1 Peter 3:8*)

- the ability to share with another in suffering, sorrow, pain, joy, gladness, excitement, happiness;
- the willingness to stand with and support others at significant times in their lives.

Joy (*Gal 5:22, John 15:11*)

- the inner sense of celebration, hope and excitement which uplifts oneself and others

Peace (*Gal 5:22, John 14:27*)

- the inner sense of well-being which reassures oneself and others
- a sense of calm amidst turmoil or confidence in chaos

- serenity derived from the assurance of God's love and mercy

Patience (*Gal 5:22, James 1:4, 5:7*)

- the ability to allow and enable people to work, learn and grow at their own pace

Kindness — (*Gal 5:22, Isa 54:7, 2 Cor. 6:6*)

- the desire to reach out to all people, especially those who are neglected, rejected, alone or difficult to love

Goodness (*Gal 5:22, 2 Thess. 1:11*)

- the determination to live life in accordance with God's will to serve as an example to others

Faithfulness (*Gal 5:22, 1 Cor. 13:2*)

- the ability to believe in spite of the evidence to the contrary

- the ability to make Christ known continuously

Gentleness (*Gal 5:22*)

- the ability to graciously treat others with dignity and respect

Self-control (*Gal 5:22*)

- to lead a virtuous life style;

- fortitude: the courage to carry faith into every aspect of life; the strength to hold to belief in the face of adversity, prosperity, ridicule and apathy;

- prudence: to do the right thing at the right time;

- temperance: to "do all things in moderation";

- justice: to affirm the uniqueness of each of God's creations and at the same time to reflect divine agape;

- to "do unto others as you would have them do unto you".

Humility (*Gal 5:22*)

- to cheerfully recognize one's place before God as God's child and the servant of all of God's people;

- the willingness to fulfill one's own ministry without the expectation or need for acknowledgment or reward;

- to fairly judge oneself but to refrain from using one's own "measuring stick" to judge others.

Knowledge (*1 Cor. 13:2*)

- to analyze, understand, organize and communicate information in a way which strengthens the body of Christ

Wisdom (*1 Cor. 2:7*)

- the capacity to approach situations reflectively, seeking the truth and listening for the Word of God

Hope (*1 Cor. 13*)

- the ability to anticipate with joy the coming of our Lord and to see his hand at work in the world even now

All of us have some of the twenty-nine gifts listed here and in Scripture. In addition, some of us have noteworthy gifts in music, theater, dance, creative writing, or athletic ability. None of us however has all of these gifts. The number of gifts entrusted to anyone of us is of no significance. What one may lack in quantity is compensated by the quality of the gifts he or she does have. Every gift is of equal importance in the divine order. God has given to the Church all of the gifts necessary for our role in the redemption of the world. To the degree that we share our gifts and to the degree that we accept graciously the gifts of others, and to the degree the Church is a faithful steward of all of the gifts it has received from God, to that degree we shall enjoy the full, rich, wholesome, abundant life God has intended for us.

When we fail to be faithful stewards, whether as individuals or as the Church, our lives are diminished and we are “disabled.” The false notion that we personally have all of the essential gifts, or that we do not need the gifts of others, robs us of some measure of the abundant life for which we were intended. All gifts are ultimately God’s, not ours; their use is for God’s purpose, not ours.

To discover at least some of the gifts entrusted to us, to find this hidden treasure, we may need to prepare still another map. It will be a mini-autobiography. Its purpose is to enable reflection on the way gifts have been expressed in the past. We can discover our gifts best in hindsight. Those experiences, which were most satisfying or most rewarding, are likely to have been those in which we used our gifts most effectively. It is in those experiences that we are acting in the way God intended us to act.

Divide a sheet of paper into four vertical columns. Give the columns the following headings:

Hobbies, Work, Education and Sabbath Work. The category entitled Hobbies includes those recreational pursuits you enjoy. The Work category includes all of the tasks you have done; lawn mowing, babysitting, summer jobs while a full-time student and the positions you have held for full or part-time employment. The Education category includes courses taken in school, continuing education programs and unique educational opportunities such as retreats, conferences or special study courses.

For each decade, list the experiences in each category that were most memorable. It does not matter whether the memory was of a “good” experience or of a “bad” experience. In order to expand your thinking and accept the notion that you are truly gifted, ask a few people who know you well during a given decade to help you remember some of your best times together. You will probably need to go back to this map from time to time and add to the list as you remember more of your life experiences.

Underline those experiences that are most important to you and circle those similar experiences that appear in more than one decade. On a new sheet of paper, make three lists. In the first list, write down those experiences that are both underlined and circled; in the second, those that are circled only; and in the third list, those that are underlined only. Now return to *A Partial List of Spiritual Gifts*. Next to each entry on your three lists, write down at least one of the gifts you felt you exercised in that situation. Your list should include at least ten, but not more than fifteen of the gifts mentioned. If you cannot discern ten gifts you have, perhaps false humility has blinded you. Ask others what gifts from this list they see in you. If you have more than fifteen, perhaps false pride has inflated your list; ask some friends to help you define more carefully which gifts you have.

If you would rather work with a group, gather four or five friends in a comfortable room. Begin your time together with a brief prayer, then provide the group with copies of *A Partial List of Spiritual Gifts*. Ask the group to read and reflect on the list. Ask each person to write his or her name across the top of a sheet of newsprint. Have each draw a horizontal line down the middle of the page and then write the word EVENT at the top of the left hand column and word WHY at the top of the right hand column. Next, ask each person in the group to spend the next 20 minutes listing in the left column the events in their lives that they consider significant and the reason for choosing each event on the right. Assure the members of the group that they are to write down only the events they wish to share with others and it is not important whether the participants consider the event “good” or “bad”.

When all members of the group have completed this first task, ask for two volunteers to begin the next step. The first volunteer is asked to display his or her newsprint and the second is asked to be a recorder. The first volunteer then reads his or her newsprint, adding comments where necessary when the task has been completed, ask the group “What gifts or talents do you see that I have?” The second volunteer records each comment on a separate sheet of newsprint. The first volunteer is not permitted to make any additional comments until the group has finished their response to the question. (Participants will generally try to deny that they have all of the gifts listed for them by others. It is important that this be discouraged!)

The first volunteer asks the group, “What weaknesses do you see that I have?” Again, they are not permitted to make any comment until all responses have been made and recorded. (Participants will generally try to add to their list of weaknesses; this should be discouraged.) This process is repeated for all members of the group.

The discovery of our gifts provides a map for our search for our hidden treasure. However, discovering some of our gifts is the next step in this journey of stewardship. If we were to stop at this point, there would be no protection from self-righteousness and neither the Church nor we would fully benefit from the gifts we have received from God. The last leg of our journey to hidden treasure will require us to use our gifts effectively in Christian ministry.

NOTES

1. Paul Tournier, *The Meaning of Gifts* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1963), p .26

RALLY DAY

Just before or just after public schools begin their fall semester, many congregations set aside a Sunday to enroll students in Church School. This is an important task and a fall Rally Day can be an exciting event for the life of the whole congregation. This is a good time to assist members of your congregation to deploy the gifts (talents) they discovered during the summer Talent Workshops. It can also be a time to organize or re-organize “Supper Clubs”, recruit new Acolytes, Altar Guild members and to seek out possible candidates for the Vestry/Bishop’s Committee; elections will take place at the Annual Meeting.

In the weeks preceding Rally Day, ask those who are engaged in ministry (Service [outreach], Worship, Education, Evangelism and Pastoral Care) and those who serve on committees of the Vestry (Building and Grounds, Finance, Stewardship, etc.) to prepare a “booth” to be set-up in the Parish Hall.

Other groups (Episcopal Churchwomen, Brotherhood of St. Andrew, Daughters of the King, Cursillo, Youth Groups, etc.) can be invited to set up their own booth as well. These booths might include photographs, videos, charts, posters or displays that show the work being undertaken by these groups. This preparation for Rally Day can be helpful in preparing for the Annual Meeting.

Be sure to announce well in advance the importance of this day. Encourage everyone to come and to choose the ministry that best reflects the talents they discovered through the Talent Workshops.

Decorate the Parish Hall. Consider having the youth group sell hot dogs and soft drinks, make it a festival! Select a theme: “Fall Harvest”, “Homecoming”, or some other theme

that's important to your congregation. Make this an exciting event.

At each booth, ask someone in that ministry to stand and be prepared to answer questions and to "sign-up" those who express an interest in participating in that ministry.

It may be necessary to provide sign-up lists for a week or two after Rally Day. Some members of the congregation may be "snow birds" or may have been ill or out of town. Be sure the sign-up sheets are readily available and visible following Rally Day.

Four Week Discussion Class

(For use in Year A — First Year of Three Year Cycle)

The Four-Week Education Discussion Class Leader's Guide

The Roles and Tasks of the Class Leader

As the leader of these classes, your role will have four tasks: 1) to prepare the space, set a suitable "climate" and know the agenda, 2) be the time keeper, 3) introduce each open-ended question and 4) participate in one of the small groups.

Prepare the space:

Make sure beverages are available as the class begins.

Have movable chairs arranged informally in rows.

Try to avoid having tables in the room.

Review the following agenda carefully.

After everyone has arrived begin the class with a prayer.

Announce the theme.

In order for everyone to have an opportunity to comment, divide your class into small groups of three or four persons.

It is generally better to separate members of the same household.

Time Keeper:

Begin the class promptly! If you wait until the last person arrives, the class will begin to expect late starts; moreover, you want to model good.

Stewardship of time.

Note the length of time anticipated for each discussion of the open-ended questions; keep to the schedule!

The Questions:

They are printed for you below.

You do not need to report the comments made in each group.

The comments are generally similar and you don't want to run the risk of breaking the trust that will emerge within each group.

Participate:

The leaders should join one of the small groups.

An alternate six-week discussion group program is available through the Episcopal Network for Stewardship tens@tens.org entitled: "*Living Our Covenant with God Study Guide*"

PROMISES

Four-Week Adult Education Discussion Class

(For use in Year A — First Year of Three Year Cycle)

WEEK ONE

The Agenda and Open-Ended Questions

Begin with a Prayer (suggestions: Collects in the BCP p. 208 or 827)

Today we are going to talk about promises. Just what do you think a promise is?
(Give each person an opportunity to respond) *10 minutes*

Can you tell us about a promise you have made that you have also kept?
(Give each person in the group an opportunity to respond) *10 minutes*

Do you believe that God makes promises to us? Does He keep them? *15 minutes*

Do you make promises to God? Do you keep them? *15 minutes*

If time permits, invite comments from anyone in the class about their experience or learning during this discussion.

PROMISES

Four-Week Adult Education Discussion Class

(For use in Year A — First Year of Three Year Cycle)

WEEK TWO

The Agenda and Open-Ended Questions

Begin with Prayer (suggestions: Collects from BCP p. 208 or 827)

Last week we began a discussion about promises. We tried to define a promise, and talked about the promises we have made and about the promises God has made. We asked ourselves if we have made promises to God and whether or not we have kept them.

Today, we will continue our conversations about promises.

When you consider making a promise, do you believe you have a choice in the matter?
Are you free to make a promise or not to make it? *10 minutes*

In the Outline of Faith in our Prayer Books, we are reminded that we are made in the image and likeness of God and “that we are free to make choices: to love, to create, to reason and to live in harmony with creation and God.”

What are some of the characteristics of God that are reflected in us? *10 minutes*

Read *Luke 19:1 -10* (Story of Zacchaeus). If we are free to make choices, then what choices did Zacchaeus make? *15 minutes*

If someone were to watch every move you made during the course of a day, would they see the image and likeness of God reflected in what you do? *10 minutes*

In the story of Zacchaeus, what helped him to make the choices he did? *10 minutes*

PROMISES

Four-Week Adult Education Discussion Class

(For use in Year A — First Year of Three Year Cycle)

WEEK THREE

The Agenda and Open-Ended Questions

Begin with Prayer (Suggestions: Collects in the BCP p.208 or 827)

Last week we talked about our freedom to make choices, reviewed briefly a portion of the Outline of Faith and considered the story of Zacchaeus. We will continue our discussion about promises today.

“The Pearl of Great Price”

*(From: Tales of a Magic Monastery by Theophane the Monk
The Crossroads Publishing Company, New York, NY)*

He asked me what I was looking for.

“Frankly,” I said, “I’m looking for the Pearl of Great Price.”

He slipped his hand in his pocket, drew it out and gave it to me. It was just like that! I was dumbfounded. Then I began to protest; “You don’t want to give it to me? Don’t you want to keep it for yourself? But ... ”

When I kept this up, he finally said, “Look, is it better to have the Pearl of Great Price or to give it away? Well, now I have it. I don’t tell anyone. From some there would be

disbelief and ridicule. You have the Pearl of Great Price? Hah!” Others would be jealous or someone might steal it. Yes, I do have it. But there’s that question: is it better to have it or to give it away? How long will that question rob me of my joy?

What is the choice that the spokesperson in this parable has to make? Can you relate to the dilemma of the spokesperson? *10 minutes*

Read Luke 18:18-23. What, if any, similarities do you see in this story and the Parable of The Pearl of Great Price? *10 minutes*

Read Matthew 22:20-21. Render unto Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s. What do you think is Caesar’s, what is God’s? How do you determine the difference? How do you decide what to give to God and what to give to Caesar? *10 minutes*

PROMISES

Four-Week Adult Education Discussion Class

(For use in Year A — First Year of Three Year Cycle)

WEEK FOUR

The Agenda and Open-Ended Questions

Begin with Prayer (Suggestions: Collects in the BCP p. 208 or 827)

Last week we talked about the choices we make in the use of our money. We considered how they point to the things that are important to us. In a way, our use of money is how we keep the promises we make. In this last class we will talk some more about promises.

Do you remember the movie, “Ghostbusters”? In the theme song we are asked, “Who you gonna call?” Now, who do you call if there is a death in your family, an illness, a birth, or if you need some special guidance or counsel? *10 minutes*

Suppose you had no phone, how would you contact those you want to know about the family crisis? Suppose the persons you wanted to contact did not have a phone, how would you contact them? *10 minutes*

There are any number of services that we take for granted. Few of us are using the telephone for conversation or computer work 24 hours a day, but we do expect it to be available when we want to use the phone. For many hours a day we use little or no water in our homes, but when we want a shower, a drink of water or need to wash dishes, we expect to have the water flow from our taps. What difference would it make if you did

not pay your phone bill or water bill? What would happen, how would your life be different? *10 minutes*

How is your relationship to your congregation like your relationship with the phone company and those with whom you have telephone conversations? What would it be like if there was no answer when you called your priest or church office? *15 minutes*

Read Acts 5:1-11. The reason Ananias and his wife died was not because of how much they gave, but rather because they broke their promise, they lied about it. If we do not want to become like Ananias and Sapphira, what can we do to make promises that we can keep? *15 minutes*

GIVE AND TAKE

Four-Week Adult Education Discussion Class

(For use in Year B — Second Year of Three Year Cycle) [See page 63 for general instructions]

WEEK ONE

The Agenda and Open-Ended Questions

Begin with Prayer (Suggestions: Collects in the BCP p. 208 or 827)

Read “*The Giving Tree*” by Shel Silverstein. *15 minutes*

If this little poem/parable were an analogy or metaphor, who might the boy/man represent? The tree? *10 minutes*

Have you ever felt like the tree? *10 minutes*

Have you ever felt like the boy/man? *10 minutes*

How, if at all, might this poem/parable affect the way you manage your money? *10 minutes*

GIVE AND TAKE

Four-Week Adult Education Discussion Class

(For use in Year B — Second Year of Three Year Cycle) (See page 63 for general instructions)

WEEK TWO

The Agenda and Open-Ended Questions

Begin with Prayer (Suggestions: Collects in the BCP p. 208 or 827)

Read *“The Day the Squirrels Changed Their Ways”*
(From The Parish Press, The Cathedral Church of St Paul, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin)
15 minutes

Once upon a time, long, long ago when the world was very young, there was a place in the deep Green Forest called Squirrel Town. Everyone called it Squirrel Town because everyone who lived there was a Squirrel. And everyone knew what a Squirrel was because a Squirrel acted like a Squirrel and did the things Squirrels do — like scampering up and down trees, living in hollow tree trunks and gathering nuts for Squirrel Town for the winter.

Old Grandfather Frog used to say, “Chug-a-rum! Who can’t tell a Squirrel from a Woodchuck, I’d like to know?” All the creatures of the deep Green Forest knew about the Squirrels’ way of doing things, but of course, it wasn’t Old Mr. Crow’s way or Reddy Fox’s way, or Peter Rabbit’s way, and why should it be, they weren’t Squirrels.

Well, the summer days went by, one by one, in the Green Forest and nothing much happened until a certain day in the fall — but I am getting ahead of my story. I forgot to tell you about the Secret Hole in the middle of Squirrel Town. The Secret Hole

was a hole deep in a hollow tree where Squirrel Town kept its supply of nuts for the winter. Each Squirrel always dropped one nut a day into the Secret Hole all summer long so that when the snow came and there weren't any nuts to be found in the Green Forest, each family could go to the Secret Hole and take out as much as they needed for food. This was the way Old Mother Nature had taught them and it worked out very well for all of them.

Now on this certain day I mentioned before, there was a great commotion in the deep Green Forest and it came from the direction of Squirrel town. Grandfather Frog heard it from his lily pad in the middle of the Smiling Pool; Reddy Fox heard it from way over in Farmer Brown's chicken yard; Peter Rabbit heard it way down under ground in his cozy home; and old Mr. Crow heard it from his perch in the old apple tree. Old Mr. Crow flew right over to Squirrel Town to see what was the matter. All the creatures in the deep Green Forest heard the same "Charter, chatter, chatter" from Squirrel town. It sounded as though the whole town was talking at once and not being very polite about it either.

Just about that time, when all the creatures in the Green Forest were wondering what on Earth had happened, Old Mother West Wind's Merry Breezes hurried through Squirrel Town and brought the news to this creature and that in the Green Forest for they were all dying of curiosity.

What the Merry Little Breeze told Grandfather Frog, Peter Rabbit, Reddy Fox and all the other creatures of the Green Forest was this shocking fact! Of all the Squirrels in Squirrel Town (a good guess would be one hundred), only ten had dropped the usual one nut a day in the Secret Hole all summer. The other ninety had various excuses but had kept most of their nuts to themselves. And since there might be a snow anytime now, Squirrel Town was not going to have enough food for the winter.

The Leaders of the town were holding a meeting this very day and appointed committees to decide what was to be done. Old Mr. Crow stayed just long enough to hear some of the discussion and flew over to see Grandfather Frog in the Smiling Pool. "Caw, caw," said Old Mr. Crow, "to think I'd see the day when Squirrels would stop doing Squirrel things. They might as well be "bats!"

"Chug-a-rum!" said Grandfather Frog, and being a wise old frog he added, "Maybe they are!"

Just then Peter Rabbit came hurrying over to Smiling Pool. "You know what the committee decided?" he asked, all out of breath. "They are going to try other ways to fill the Secret Hole with nuts. The first thing will be a big Tree Leaping Show for all of the Green Forest and the price of admission will be one nut each. Then, the next week, they are going to have a Squirrel Race and take nut-bets on the favorites. The lady Squirrels are going to bake their best nut recipes to sell to all the Green Forest folk for more nuts. And after that, the Leaders have decided to let anyone live in Squirrel Town who wants to, if he will just bring a few nuts for the Secret Hole. You don't even have to be a Squirrel!"

"My gracious!" said Grandfather Frog. "They must be excited. Now as I see it, if there are only ten real Squirrels left, there are only ten real Squirrels to be fed. If each of the ten put in his nut a day, there will be plenty for all as usual. I do hope they think of that."

“Well”, said Peter Rabbit, “the Leaders said that Squirrel Town has to grow. A loss of ninety Squirrels will look very strange to the other creatures in the Green Forest and what will other Squirrel Towns think? They will think there is something the matter with Squirrel Town of Green Forest”. “So would I,” said wise old Grandfather Frog. “Perhaps they had better find out what it is.” “Caw, caw,” said old Mr. Crow, “I think I’ll have a talk with that strange young Squirrel over by Farmer Brown’s barn.” And he flew off.

Peter Rabbit winked at Grandfather Frog. “He’ll get to the bottom of this, just you wait.”

And sure enough, about an hour later, back flew Old Mr. Crow to the Smiling Pool just as Grandfather Frog and Peter Rabbit were figuring out how they would bet on the Squirrel races.

“Amazing,” cawed Old Mr. Crow, “what that Squirrel told me. He said to me, “Well, Mr. Crow, I’ll be honest with you. We modern Squirrels believe in Mother Nature, but we really don’t believe in her ways, one whole nut’s worth a day. A Squirrel has many obligations these days over and above Squirrel Town. There’s the rest of the world you know and a Squirrel can’t stick that close to Mother Nature’s old-fashioned Ways and get the most out of his life for himself.”

At this, Grandfather Frog slid off his lily pad into Smiling Pool — ker-plick! Peter Rabbit murmured, “Oh dear me!” and hopped off to his cozy hole. Old Mr. Crow flew off to the Broadcasting Station and Mother West Wind quickly called the Merry Little Breezes home for the night.

Mother Nature smiled to herself as she hung out the stars. She knew that there would be Squirrels in the deep Green Forest for a long time, and she knew that Squirrels can’t stay real Squirrels for very long unless they do Squirrel things.

Do you see any similarity between the Squirrels and the Church? If so, what are they? *15 minutes*

What is it that made a Squirrel a *real* Squirrel? *15 minutes*

What do you think Mother Nature meant at the end of the story? “*She knew that Squirrels couldn’t stay real Squirrels for very long unless they do Squirrel things.*” *10 minutes*

GIVE AND TAKE

Four-Week Adult Education Discussion Class

(For use in Year B — Second Year of Three Year Cycle) [See page 63 for general instructions]

WEEK THREE

The Agenda and Open-Ended Questions

Begin with Prayer (Suggestions: Collects in the BCP p. 208 or 827)

Read “Little Jessie” *Two minutes*

When Jessie was about two and a half years old, I visited with her and her parents. While I was there, Jessie walked quietly over to a candy dish on the coffee table and took out an orange jellybean. She looked at her mother and said, “Mine,” and promptly ate the candy. Her mother gently said, “No, that is not yours.” A few minutes later, Jessie walked to the candy dish again. Shyly, she looked at her mother and reached into the candy dish a second time. When her mother reached out to retrieve the jellybean, Jessie popped it into her mouth and said, “Just one more.” Her mother gently slapped her hand and said, “No more, they are not yours.” A third time Jessie walked to the candy dish. Again, she reached in, took a jellybean and popped it into her mouth. Before her mother could say a word, Jessie flashed her most winning smile and said, “Too late!”

Do you think there is a “Little Jessie” in each of us? *15 minutes*

What might be the consequences for others, if we acted like “Little Jessie”? *15 minutes*

What might be alternatives to the way “Little Jessie” behaved? *15 minutes*

GIVE AND TAKE

Four-Week Adult Education Discussion Class

(For use in Year B—Second Year of Three Year Cycle) [See page 63 for general instructions]

WEEK FOUR

The Agenda and Open-Ended Questions

Begin with Prayer (Suggestions: Collects in the BCP p. 208 or 827)

Read “Barrington Bunny” *10 minutes*
(from *Way of the Wolf* by Martin Bell)

In this little parable, what changed Barrington’s outlook from a sad and crying bunny to one who took gifts to the other woodland creatures? *10 minutes*

What difference, if any, did it make to Barrington to know that all of the creatures of the forest were his family? *10 minutes*

How, if at all, are we like Barrington Bunny? *10 minutes*

Baptism reminds us that we are all a part of a larger family. Does that influence the way we might manage our gifts? Why, why not? *10 minutes*

THE IMPORTANT THINGS

Four-Week Adult Education Discussion Class

(For use in Year C - Third Year of Three Year Cycle) [See page 63 for general instructions]

WEEK ONE

The Agenda and Open-Ended Questions

Begin with Prayer (Suggestions: Collects in the BCP p. 208 or 827)

Print out the following list of “*Some Personal Treasures*” and circulate copies to members of the groups.

SOME PERSONAL TREASURES

- My savings and investment portfolio
- My house(s) and/or other real estate holdings
- My car(s)
- My silver service and flatware; and my china
- My artwork and furniture
- My library and photo albums
- My life insurance benefits
- My boat, motorcycle, motor home, trailer
- My collection of: Musical Instruments, Coins, Dolls, Souvenirs, etc.
- Other

First, review the list of Personal Treasures. Add, delete or amend the list in order to more accurately describe all of your assets. Within your small group, discuss. *15 minutes*

Now, imagine that you are preparing to leave the country for a long time and you want to prepare a Will in the event you die while out of the country. To whom would you give some or all of your assets? What portion of each type of asset would you give to each recipient? *20 minutes*

What portion, if any, would you give to God and God's work? To your church? To charities? What helped you decide what portion you would give? *15 minutes*

THE IMPORTANT THINGS

Four-Week Adult Education Discussion Class

(For use in Year C— Third Year of 3-Year Cycle) [See page 63 for general instructions]

WEEK TWO

The Agenda and Open-Ended Questions

Begin with Prayer (Suggestions: Collects in the BCP p. 208 or 827)

Read "Gator Swamp" *5 minutes*

(A paraphrase of "Alligator River" from Values Clarification by Sidney Simon; et al)

Once upon a time there was a woman named Sarah who was in love with a man named Samuel. Samuel lived at the edge of a great swamp. Sarah lived on the opposite edge of the swamp. The swamp, which separated the two lovers, was teeming with wild man-eating alligators. Sarah wanted to cross through the swamp to be with Samuel.

Unfortunately, the road that went through the swamp had been washed out in the recent hurricane. So she went to Joseph, who owned a small fishing boat and asked him if he would take her across Gator Swamp. He said he would be glad to if she would consent to give the church ten percent of all that she had. She promptly refused, for she was a rich young woman.

Sarah went to her friend James to explain her plight. He said that it did not matter at all what she did with her money. He told Sarah to go away and leave him alone. Sarah felt that her only alternative was to do as Joseph had asked. After giving ten percent of all that she owned to the church, Joseph fulfilled his promise and delivered Sarah safely in to the arms of Samuel.

When Sarah told Samuel what she had done in order to cross the swamp, Samuel rose up in anger. "How could you do such a thing?" he said. "I was counting on that

money to pay off the loan on my new boat". With those words he cast her out and refused ever to have anything to do with Sarah again.

Heartsick and dejected, Sarah went to Peter and told him her sad tale. Peter, the mortgage holder for Samuel's boat, felt great compassion for Sarah. He went to Samuel and demanded that Samuel pay the whole of his outstanding debt. Since Samuel could not pay, Peter foreclosed and took all of Samuel's property. Sarah was overjoyed at seeing Samuel get his due. As the sun sets we hear Sarah walking hand in hand with Peter and laughing at the now destitute Samuel.

There are five characters in this story: Sarah, Samuel, Joseph, James and Peter. Which one did you like best, least? Why? *25 minutes*

If you had been Sarah, Samuel, Joseph, James or Peter, what might you have done? *20 minutes*

THE IMPORTANT THINGS

Four-Week Adult Education Discussion Class

(For use in Year C—Third Year of Three Year Cycle) [See page 63 for general instructions]

WEEK THREE

The Agenda and Open-Ended Questions

Print out and circulate copies of the following list of Rank Order Choices Survey:

Please take a few minutes to rank order each of the questions on the Rank Order Choices Survey". When we have completed the survey, we will discuss our answers. *10 minutes*

RANK ORDER CHOICE SURVEY

1. If I gave you \$500, what would you do with it?

- _____ save it
- _____ give it to charity
- _____ buy something for yourself

2. Which would you *least* like to be?

- _____ very poor
- _____ very sick
- _____ disfigured

3. Which do you think is the most religious thing to do on Sunday morning?

_____ go to church
_____ eat breakfast with your family or friends
_____ play golf or go for a walk in the woods or at the beach

4. What would you think if you saw a man burning a dollar bill?

_____ that man is foolish
_____ that man has integrity
_____ why doesn't that man give me the dollar?

5. If you suddenly inherited money and became a millionaire, would you

_____ share your wealth through church and charities?
_____ really live it up?
_____ invest it and continue your present job and activities?

6. If you were financially well off and you inherited \$10,000, would you

_____ put it all in savings?
_____ invest it in the stock market?
_____ spend it all?

7. Which do you most want money for:

_____ to buy food, clothing and housing?
_____ for recreation and leisure (travel, vacations, etc.)?
_____ to feel independent?

8. Where would you go to seek help in a strange city

_____ a church?
_____ the police station?
_____ a hospital?

9. If you were stranded on a desert island, which would you rather have

_____ the complete works of Shakespeare?
_____ the Bible?
_____ the history of civilization?

10. Which best describes the way you handle money spend it freely?

_____ always look for bargains
_____ budget carefully

Would one of you like to tell the rest of us how you ranked #1 and why?

Does anyone else want to tell us your rankings?

(Continue through all ten questions) *30 minutes*

When you write your checks and pay your bills each month, you are making choices like those we made in the Rank Order Choices Survey.

There are just a whole lot more things to rank. How do you determine the order of importance for you in making those choices? *20 minutes*

THE IMPORTANT THINGS

Four-Week Adult Education Discussion Class

(For use in Year C — Third Year of Three Year Cycle) [See page 63 for general instructions]

WEEK FOUR

The Agenda and Open-Ended Questions

Begin with a Prayer (suggestions: Collects in the BCP p. 208 or 827)

(Pass out two sheets of blank paper to each person in the group. Ask each member to draw a circle on one of the sheets of paper.)

Please draw a large circle on one sheet of the paper I gave you. This circle represents a segment of your life. We will draw another circle on the other sheet of paper a little later. It will represent another segment of your life.

Take a few minutes to think about a typical day in your life. Divide the circle into four quarters using dotted lines. Each slice of this “pie” represents six hours. Now, please estimate how many hours or parts of an hour you spend on each of the following activities on a typical work day. *30 minutes*

Sleep
Work
Meal preparation, clean up and eating
Commuting
Leisure

Home/yard maintenance
Health and hygiene
Continuing education
Prayer, Bible study
Volunteer activities

Would anyone like to tell us what they discovered about the way you spend your time?
10 minutes

Please take out the second sheet of paper. Once again draw a circle and divide it into four quarters. Please estimate how you divide your monthly income. *10 minutes*

Mortgage or rent
Food (both meals prepared at home and meals eaten out)
Clothing
Transportation (car loan or lease, gas, tolls and parking)
Church and charities
Savings and investments
Utilities
Gifts
Medical and dental expenses

CELEBRATION SUNDAY

This Celebration Sunday program is modeled on a number of similar programs. Among them are *The Covenant Plan* by Ebert Hobbs, *Consecration Sunday Stewardship Program* by Herb Miller and *A Plan for Stewardship Education and Development Throughout the Year*. There are several components that appear in nearly all of them: a team of leaders, a series of letters of invitation, a series of short talks on Stewardship themes by lay persons, a service of worship, a Main Event (usually a meal), the collection of pledge cards (but not home visits) and a series of follow-up letters (thank you notes or appeals to those who have not yet made a pledge). This program takes place over three or four weeks and is an effective way to collect pledge cards. Used by itself; without the other resources and educational components contained in this book, a Celebration Sunday program will rarely increase giving more than the annual inflation rate!

The St. Clement's, Tampa Experience with Celebration Sunday
By The Rev. Alton Chapman, Rector

The ideas in this type of program are very workable, easy to administer, can be easily modified as needed and have great potential to help any congregation accomplish the "fall endeavor" to collect pledge cards and prepare an annual budget. However, unless this type of program has a good educational component throughout the year, it will simply be the "*fall spasm*" (a program "stuffed" together to get data for a budget)!

When this type of program is combined with a solid education program which includes many the following subjects: biblical, traditional and reasonable teaching about the tithe, why one is to tithe, a Statement of Unique Ministry, a Narrative Budget, people sharing about how one works toward the tithe and a year-round focus on Stewardship, then the approach to Celebration Sunday is a natural occurrence. It places the pledge card in the

positive light, a statement of fortitude, not just obligation or response to the parish budget. The pledge card becomes an outward, visible and person/family response of thanksgiving to the Lord our God who has become visible and active in one's life in all the circumstances of their lives.

St. Clement's Education task:

Our first task was to help the congregation make a pledge that demonstrates their commitment to become better stewards. The goal was to encourage the congregation to increase the level of giving by individuals/families toward the biblical standard of a tithe by increasing their individual pledge by 1% (of their annual income) per year. By teaching the congregation to accept this sacred partnership with God, the tithe would be established as the standard of giving for all members. We would assist our congregation to make a prudent and pastorally sensitive commitment to our Lord Jesus by asking them to give proportionately and systematically (in keeping with their ability). Opportunity for members to share is very important as they work to place their financial life in order. Our second task was to have educational programs at times of the day and evening when members were able to attend.

The Plan for Celebration Sunday

Every member who makes a pledge would do so by coming to church on Celebration Sunday for the purposes of worshipping together, making their financial commitment (pledge) to the Lord's work and to eat a meal together. (In many plans like this, it is suggested that one get an outside speaker for this Sunday's Celebration, we declined to do so.) We wanted this celebration to be a normal part of our life together as a parish family and as an act of worship and commitment to our Lord Jesus. There were no home solicitations for pledges, although everyone will be asked to make some response to our Celebration. At the morning worship service, the Rector, (or another person appointed by the Rector), would conduct a simple period of instruction in filling out the card and how they will be collected. Each person/family coming to the service would be asked in advance of the services, to be prepared to fill out the pledge card on Celebration Sunday. The pledge will be between each member and their God, and remain strictly confidential. The program strives to prevent personal embarrassment for people who do not choose to fill out a pledge card at that time. Hopefully, no one would thereby have feelings of intimidation, manipulation or coercion of any type. They may simply write on the card, "No pledge at this time, but will make a financial commitment", and then turn it in when they are collected.

The organization for Celebration Sunday

The Celebration Committee was the vestry since they are the elected leaders of the congregation. Vestry members were responsible for two tasks: 1) to notify every member of St. Clement's asking them to participate in both the Celebration Sunday service of worship and the Celebration Sunday Luncheon immediately following the service; 2) to contact all members and "friends of the Parish" who did not attend the Celebration Sunday events and mail each of them a pledge card with a letter asking them to make a

commitment to our Lord Jesus through St. Clement's for the following year.

Time Line.

We held Celebration Sunday on the last Sunday in October. This allowed the budget committee to know what funds would be available in preparing the next year's budget. The budget would be submitted to the Vestry for adjustment and/or approval.

Three weeks before Celebration Sunday:

Sunday — A Vestry person (or another appointed person) made a brief announcement (not more than five minutes) at the worship service during the announcement period, regarding 1) the importance of Celebration Sunday; 2) the Luncheon, including the need to make reservations since our meal was a catered one. The first time we used this program the meal was a catered, however, in the three years since, we have held a pot-luck type meal because the people of St. Clement's prefer that to a catered meal; 3) the date, day and time of the events on Celebration Sunday; and 4) a brief "talk" concerning their understanding of Stewardship and that our giving was to support the ministry of the Church, our Lord's ministry and not a church budget or program.

Monday — An invitation letter was written and sent to each individual/family in the parish and regular visitors and friends of the parish. Included in this invitation were: the date and time of Celebration Sunday (mentioning there attendance is needed at both the Eucharistic Celebration and the Luncheon) and an announcement that no one would visit at their homes, but that someone would phone to confirm their attendance at the Eucharist and the luncheon.

Two weeks before Celebration Sunday

Sunday — A different Vestry person (or person appointed) made a brief announcement at the worship services to remind people of the importance of Celebration Sunday and the Luncheon. Also, at this time, one person gave a short talk on their understanding of Stewardship and the importance of responding to our Lord's call to ministry both financially and physically.

One week before Celebration Sunday

Sunday — A Vestry person (or another person appointed) gave the sermon about Stewardship. As a part of the sermon, the congregation was asked to pray about increasing their pledge by 1% of their annual income, encouraged to pray and to talk with other members of their family and friends about their pledge and to come to Celebration Sunday prepared to complete their pledge card.

Included in the Sunday bulletin was a chart which demonstrated a tithe of various income levels and invited people to estimate what their giving level was compared to a tithe. Also included in the Sunday bulletin were a reservation card and a sample pledge card.

Those in attendance were asked to complete the reservation card and place it in the offering plate.

Sample Celebration Sunday Reservation Card

I will be present for the Celebration Sunday Service and for the Luncheon:

Sunday (date) Yes _____ No _____

The number of persons attending with me will be _____

Name _____

Phone _____

Monday — Another letter was mailed to all members and friends. This letter was to remind members and friends of Celebration Sunday and of the importance of their presence.

Tuesday — **Thursday** — Phone calls were placed to members and friends to obtain reservations from those who had not yet made one.

CELEBRATION SUNDAY

The Rector, at the end of the sermon, had pledge cards distributed by the ushers and then provided five minutes of silent prayer after the sermon. The congregation was then asked to complete their pledge cards and to place it in the Offering plate at the Offertory. The reason for collecting pledge cards during the offertory is to place stewardship in its proper context, our worship.

Immediately following the service, the Treasurer “tallied” the pledges and during the luncheon gave a report.

Monday — A letter was mailed to persons who did not attend the Celebration Sunday Service and Luncheon. It included a stamped, addressed, return envelope and a pledge card. The letter said that we wanted every member and friend of the congregation to have the opportunity to be a giver of record to the parish. The recipients of the letter were asked to complete the pledge card or to write, “At this time I will not be making a pledge” and return the pledge card in the addressed envelope.

A separate letter of appreciation was mailed to each individual/family who had completed a pledge card. As pledge cards arrived throughout the week (and later) they too were acknowledge with a personal letter.

One week after Celebration Sunday

The Celebration Committee (the Vestry) gathered. The names of those who had not yet pledged were distributed and divided among the members of the committee. Phone calls were then made to each individual family who had not made a pledge. The content of the call was simply to ask if they were going to participate with a financial commitment to

the ministry of the Church. The Celebration was ending this week and the budget committee needed accurate information in order to do their work.

APPENDIX A

Additional Selections from Early Church Authors

From: Leo the Great, Bishop of Rome (461)

In the gospel of John the Lord says: “In this will all know that you are my disciples. If you have love for each other.” In a letter of the same apostle we read: “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God, whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.”

The faithful should therefore enter into themselves and make a true judgment on theft attitudes of mind and heart. If they find some store of love’s fruit in their hearts, they must not doubt God’s presence within them. If they would increase theft capacity to receive so great a guest, they should practice greater generosity in doing good, with persevering charity.

If God is love, charity should know no limits, for God cannot be confined.

(The sermon goes on for two paragraphs related specifically to Lent then continues.)

Let us now extend to the poor and those afflicted in different ways a more open-handed generosity, so that God may be thanked through many voices and the relief of the needy supported by our fasting. No act of devotion on the part of the faithful gives God more pleasure than that which is lavished on his poor. Where he finds charity with its loving concern, then he recognizes the reflection of his own fatherly care.

In these acts of giving do not fear a lack of means. A generous spirit is itself great wealth. There can be no shortage of material for generosity where it is Christ who feeds and Christ who is fed. In this activity there is present the hand of him who multiplies the

bread by breaking it, and increases it giving it away.

The giver of alms should be free from anxiety and full of joy. Their gain will be greatest when they keep back less for themselves. The apostle Paul tells us: “He who provides seed for the sower will also provide bread for eating; he will provide you with more seed, and will increase the harvest of your goodness”, in Christ Jesus our Lord, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever.

From: Maximus the Confessor, Abbot (662)

Charity is a right attitude of mind, which prefers nothing to the knowledge of God. If we possess any strong attachment to the things of this earth, we cannot possess true charity.

For anyone who really loves God prefers to know and experience God rather than his creatures. The whole set and longing of such a person’s mind is ever directed toward God.

For God is far superior to all his creatures since everything which exists has been made by God and for God. And so, in deserting God, who is beyond compare, for the inferior works of creation, we show that we value God, the author of creation, less than creation itself. The Lord himself reminds us: “Whoever loves me will keep my commandments. And this is my commandment; that you love one another.” So the one who does not love a neighbor does not obey God’s command. But one who does not obey his command cannot love God. One is blessed if one can love all people equally. Moreover, if one truly loves God, one must love one’s neighbor absolutely. Such a one cannot hoard wealth rather like God himself; one generously gives from one’s own resources to all according to their needs.

Since one imitated God’s generosity, the only distinction one draws is the person’s need: Such a person does not distinguish between a good person and a bad person, a just person and one who is unjust. Let personal goodness will make the one who strives after virtue preferred to the one who is depraved.

A charitable mind is not displayed simply in giving money; it is manifested still more by personal service as well as by the communication of God’s word to others. In fact, if service toward one’s brothers and sisters is genuine and if one really renounces worldly concerns, one is freed from selfish desires. For one now shares in God’s own knowledge and love. Since one does possess God’s love, one does not experience weariness as one follows the Lord God.

A reading from the treatise On Works and Almsgiving

By Cyprian, Bishop and Martyr of Carthage (258)

You, who are rich and wealthy, buy for yourselves from Christ gold that has been tried by fire. Then, after your impurities have been burnt out as if by fire, you may be pure gold if you are cleansed by alms giving and just works.

Buy for yourselves white garments, that you who were naked according to Adam and were previously frightful and unsightly may be clothed with the white garment of Christ. And you, who are wealthy and rich in Christ's Church, do not anoint your eyes with the eyewash of the devil. Anoint them, rather, with the eye-salve of Christ, that you may merit the vision of God, by obtaining his favor through your almsgiving and good conduct.

However, I am not surprised that a person such as you cannot avail yourself of the opportunity to perform works of charity. Your eyes are so painted and shadowed that a kind of dark night hangs over them and prevents them from seeing the poor and needy.

You are wealthy and rich, and yet you think that you worthily celebrate the Lord's Supper although you do not even look at the poor box, come to church without sacrifice, and take only part of the sacrifice, which the poor have offered!

Consider the woman in the gospel who was mindful of the heavenly precepts amid the most dire poverty and cast into the treasury two copper coins — all that she had. Seeing her, our Lord paid less attention to her good action than to the intention behind it; he considered not so much the amount she gave but the amount from which she took what she gave.

Thus, he declares: "I assure you, this poor widow has put in more than all the rest. They make contributions out of their surplus, but she from her want has given what she could not afford — every penny she had to live on." What a highly blessed and glorious woman, who even before the Day of Judgment merited to be praised by the voice of the Judge! Let the rich be ashamed of the barrenness and lack of faith; here is a widow — and a poverty-stricken one at that — who is generous in works. Everything that we give is conferred on widows and orphans, yet here is one who gives instead of receiving; we can therefore realize what punishment lies in store for the rich when by this teaching even the poor are not exempt from almsgiving.

Furthermore, to demonstrate that it is to God himself that these charities are made — and that whoever makes them draws down grace and merits a reward — Christ calls them "gifts of God". He points out that this widow has placed two copper coins among the gifts of God, showing ever more clearly that the one who has pity on the poor lends to God.

APPENDIX (B)

Additional Resources:

The Episcopal Network for Stewardship

3750 East Douglas Avenue

Wichita, Kansas 67208

800-699-2669

Website: <http://www.tens.org>

E-Mail: tens@tens.org

www.tithing.org

www.mckennatithing.org

www.religiousresources.org

www.theartoftithing.com