



RESPONSIBILITIES OF A STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

Please keep in mind that parishes should view this list as a **WORK-IN-PROGRESS**. It is not intended that parish committees attempt to accomplish all of these duties and tasks in their first year, or even several years.

1. Draft a Mission Statement

The parish Stewardship Council/Committee should have its own mission statement that reflects the manner and purpose for carrying out the goals and objectives of the council. This mission statement should be directly in line with the mission statement of the parish.

2. **Carry out the Stewardship Effort of time, talent, and treasure on an annual basis.** These efforts usually run two or three weekends every year. On the first weekend of a two weekend effort and on each of the first two weekends of a three weekend effort the pastor would deliver a homily on stewardship and a lay person or couple would give a personal testimony on how stewardship is lived out in their life or lives. The last weekend would always be a Commitment Sunday, where parishioners would bring their commitment cards of time, talent, and treasure to Mass and place them in the basket.

3. **Recruit individuals and/or couples to share their personal testimonies about stewardship with the parishioners.** The lay witness testimony is probably the most educational, motivational, and important part of the stewardship effort. The lay witness talk makes stewardship very real and practical for the people in the pews. Witnesses should be individuals from the parish who believe and practice the principals of stewardship in their own lives—those who give of their time, talent and treasure.

4. **Prepare a time and talent list or catalog of parish activities and ministries, and keep the list or catalog current.** A list or catalog gives parishioners an opportunity to become aware of the number and type of ministries available in the parish. Some parishes may have ten opportunities; others may have fifty. They may range from altar server to youth group counselor. Some parishes develop an actual pamphlet or catalog that provides a detailed description of each group or activity. Others may use a simple listing with little details. While the primary emphasis is on *current* groups or activities, items that you would like to start, such as welcoming committee or a homeless shelter crew, can be added. Many parishes have a stewardship ministry fair to promote the many parish and community groups that provide service opportunities to parishioners.

5. **Ensure that those who volunteer are contacted and asked to become involved.** It is important that the stewardship council works with the appropriate parish commissions and groups to ensure that those who commit of their time and talent are personally invited to become involved. This activity of the council is probably its most challenging task. It takes planning before the 2-3 weekend effort and follow-up after Commitment Sunday to make sure people end up actually volunteering. If people are not contacted and instead just have their names put in a book or in a computer, then they will not get involved in future stewardship efforts. They will also start to believe that stewardship is only about money.

- Parishes might consider bringing the ministry leaders together for an appreciation event combined with an opportunity to present the stewardship message and the importance of the follow-up procedures. When ministry leaders understand the importance of their position and the follow-up and training of new ministers, they are more likely to respond to the stewardship effort in a positive and timely manner.
6. **Evaluate the stewardship effort and awareness efforts on an annual basis.** All elements of the stewardship effort in the parish need to be evaluated. Review comments, criticisms, and questions received with commitment cards. Evaluate the written materials used throughout the year—letters, brochures, bulletin announcements, newsletter articles, etc. discuss the verbal presentations—are the homilies and lay witness testimonies getting the stewardship message across? What more could we be doing to get stewardship information out to people? What kind of results are we getting from the stewardship effort? Always look to the spiritual life of the parish when evaluating stewardship. Do these efforts bring people closer to God? What symptoms of spiritual change are evident in the parish?
 7. **Publicize stewardship thoughts throughout the year in the parish bulletin on a weekly basis.** It is very easy to put a few lines about stewardship in the bulletin each week. With little effort, it can be one way to keep the stewardship message in front of people on a regular basis. These reflections can include Scripture quotes; quotes from books, magazines and newspapers; or ideas that you jot down while going about stewardship work in your parish. **DO NOT PLACE A “STEWARDSHIP” HEADING OVER YOUR OFFERTORY REPORT. THIS ONLY FUELS THE MISCONCEPTION THAT STEWARDSHIP IS ONLY ABOUT MONEY.**
 8. **Make appropriate stewardship literature available in the parish booklet racks.** Including stewardship brochures or pamphlets in the booklet rack provides people with an opportunity to read and learn more about stewardship apart from any brochures that might be used for the annual effort. You may want to rotate three or four brochures throughout the year. We have one available through the Diocesan Office, and there are several companies that also produce great stewardship materials.
 9. **Publicize stewardship reflections in the parish newsletter on a quarterly basis.** Stewardship reflections could include profiles of individuals or couples in the parish who live lives committed to stewardship, questions and answers on stewardship, thoughts on stewardship, commentaries on stewardship, ministry spotlights, etc. You may also want to consider producing a special newsletter each year that focuses only on stewardship.
 10. **Incorporate comments about stewardship in the Sunday homilies.** The council could suggest that the priest(s) incorporate comments about stewardship in the Sunday homilies on a monthly basis. In looking at the three-year cycle of gospel readings, there are opportunities to convey a stewardship-related message almost every month. In some instances, the whole homily could focus on stewardship. In others, a few sentences can be incorporated into the context of the entire homily.
 11. **Encourage support for stewardship through the Prayers of the Faithful at Mass.** The council can develop Prayers of the Faithful with a stewardship message that can be prayed at regular intervals throughout the year. Typically one stewardship prayer among all the other Prayers of the Faithful would be sufficient.
 12. **Develop a welcoming effort for new parishioners.** Work with the appropriate parish ministries to develop efforts for welcoming parishioners, whether it is by personal visits, in group meetings, or through the mail. Be sure to include a discussion of and materials about stewardship in the presentation and/or packet.

13. **Develop a commissioning service for those who volunteer in the parish ministries.** Work with the Liturgy Commission to develop and plan a commissioning service to be held at all Masses on commissioning Sunday. Be sure to check with all ministry leaders to ensure that the new volunteers have been contacted and formed in their individual ministries. This is best done after the homily as part of the Prayers of the Faithful.
14. **Show appreciation for those who are involved in parish ministry.** Gratitude is an important element of stewardship. Find a way to say “thank-you” to those people who volunteer in the parish. This could involve something as simple as an appreciation reception after Mass or as elaborate as a catered dinner.
15. **Develop a plan of stewardship education to be incorporated into the faith formation program for children, youth and adults.** Work closely with the parish school, Director of Faith Formation, and youth ministers to ensure that the stewardship message becomes a part of the faith formation process. In many cases, incorporating stewardship language and terminology into the existing curriculum is all that is needed to promote stewardship among children and youth. Preparation for Confirmation should have a stewardship component. Work with your RCIA director to ensure the catechumens and candidates have a good understanding of stewardship. The adults of the parish might appreciate a stewardship presentation by a motivational speaker.
16. **Add a children’s component to your parish stewardship effort.** In addition to including stewardship education in the faith formation curriculum, include children in your 2 or 3 weekend stewardship effort. Consider forming a sub-committee to address the entire field of children’s stewardship.
17. **Provide opportunities for gifts discernment.** Parishioners should be given an opportunity to help discover their own spiritual gifts and then use those gifts in service to others. Parish stewardship efforts can include programs and workshops on the discernment of gifts to better help parishioners find the ministry best suited for them. Check out the Spiritual Gifts Inventory!
18. **Provide in-service and continuing education for your stewardship council.** The chairperson of the stewardship council should make sure each member receives the most current awareness information sent by the Office of Stewardship and Mission Advancement. Councils should plan to attend diocesan-wide programs such as the Diocesan Stewardship Day, regional conferences, and the International Catholic Stewardship Council’s (ICSC) annual conference.
19. **Develop an annual plan.** Each committee should develop a detailed yearly plan that includes the organization and preparation for the 2 or 3 weekend effort as well as monthly awareness activities.
20. **Expand your focus beyond the parish.** Consider spreading the message of stewardship beyond the parish. One way to do that is to encourage the diocesan newspaper, The Catholic Miscellany, to print stewardship profiles or stewardship questions and answers. You may even want to supply the paper with your own profiles and questions and answers.