

Stewardship is the Main Work of the Church

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The Book of Common Prayer teaches us that “The Mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ,” and that “the Church carries out its mission through the ministry of all its members” (BCP 855). The unstated but clear implication of this teaching is that the main work of the Church is involving people in using all that is entrusted to them in carrying out the mission. Said simply, stewardship is the main work of the Church.

Thus, stewardship is more than church support; it is the use of “the gifts given to us to carry on Christ’s work of reconciliation in the world.” Therefore, the way we use or do not use resources to further unity and reconciliation in our homes, our communities, and our occupations is our stewardship. Yet stewardship is not less than church support. Our worshiping, working, praying, and giving within the Church provide the support that we and others need to engage in the often difficult and lonely tasks of proclaiming the good news, loving our neighbors, and striving for justice and peace.

Stewardship is more than a duty: it is a thankful response to God's graciousness to us. As such, it is an opportunity to praise God with our lives in thanksgiving:

- for the blessings of creation;
- for the birth, life, teaching, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and our redemption;
- for the gift of the Spirit;
- for the word, sacraments, and fellowship that sustain and transform us as the Church.

Stewardship is an adventure, an expedition into the kingdom where we find our lives through losing them for the sake of the gospel. It is an invitation to offer our gifts for the purpose for which we were created—the only purpose that will fulfill us. It is a challenge to refocus our lives by designing our budgets around tithing. It offers us a way to begin breaking the bonds of consumption that involve us, often unwittingly, in perpetuating injustice and oppression.

All of God's people, within and without the Church, can learn that to be held accountable for our lives as stewards of God's gifts is to discover our own true great worth before God. We believe that discovery, too, is a gift, a gift that brings unspeakable joy. The main work of the Church is to bring its people, and through them all people, to this joyful knowledge, which will “restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.”

— adopted and affirmed by the General Convention of the Episcopal Church, meeting in Detroit, July 1988 (Resolution A-163). The General Convention calls upon the stewardship committee or commission of each diocese to publish this statement with an invitation for study and discussion at the local church level.