

CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP WORK BOOK



produced by members of the
CTBI STEWARDSHIP NETWORK

Christian Stewardship is the greatest religious principle before the world today.

It is a revolutionary principle – a principle which would change our human relationships if it were universally grasped and applied.

Dr. Lovejoy in 1928.

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An early and basic definition of Christian stewardship is: "*Christian stewardship is a way of life in which we regard ourselves and all that we have as a trust from God to be used in his service for what he has done for us in Jesus Christ.*"

A more contemporary definition is "*Our goal is to teach a much more realistic and spirit led holistic stewardship – learning to give ourselves and our resources away as God's prophetic Word beckons us to do with compassion and justice for all God's people.*"

Christian stewardship is, therefore, the Gospel in action and a good steward is one who has responded to the good news and tries to share it. Stewardship is the management of life.

Stewardship, therefore, is closely connected with the preaching of the Gospel and the response to that Gospel.

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'Stewardship is response to the grace of God in Jesus Christ. It can never be separated from the Good News itself. When the note of grace is left out, the stewardship theme is not only weakened, it becomes dangerous. It can be preached, and often is, as an extra discipline, an added load for already tired Christians to carry. As a free response to the overwhelming gift of God in Christ, however, *it becomes a way of life that is spontaneous and joyful.*'

(BCC Bulletin on Stewardship)

Christian Stewardship Workbook

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CHURCHES TOGETHER
in
BRITAIN AND IRELAND

**This Workbook has been produced by
members of the Stewardship Network of
Churches Together in Britain and Ireland.**

This edition was prepared by the Mission Education Department
of the Methodist Church, 2005

The Workbook – a guide to its use

This Workbook is designed to aid the discussion and consideration of different aspects of Christian Stewardship.

It can be used with large or small groups and the symbols below indicate how the text and questions can be considered.

Subjects may be tackled individually and selectively. However, it is suggested that the first Section on the Biblical basis of Christian Stewardship is not to be omitted when the whole workbook is being used.

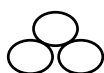
KEY TO SYMBOLS



Study Alone



Quotes



Share within group



Report on this
(as a conclusion and for action)



Meditate

1 CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP: THE BIBLICAL BASIS

Stewardship is closely connected with the preaching of the Gospel and the response to that Gospel.

This is where it begins, in scripture. Christian Stewardship is not merely good management of the earth, the right use of resources, conservation of energy. These are areas where effort can be expended by any citizen to maintain a good environment or look after the world. The Christian response has a basis which comes from God and seeks not merely to make the world look smart but to make it right.

Stewardship also has a very personal application as, for example, how we as individuals use the resource that is our own life.

This is why the following section on scriptural themes of stewardship is the starting point and the launching pad for consideration of all other aspects of stewardship.

Introduction

Everyone, it seems, would prefer a better word than 'stewardship' although no-one has yet proposed a convincing alternative. Only twice in the Old Testament is it mentioned (**Genesis 43:19; and 44:4**); on both occasions, it mean '*one who is over the house*'. The New Testament references are also few: seven times in **Luke 16:1-13**; and once in **Luke 12:42**, we find 'oikonomos' (*lit: house-manager*) and the same word is found also in **1Cor 4:1-2; Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 4:10**. A second word, meaning 'someone to whom something has been entrusted' is translated 'steward' in **Matthew 20:8**; and **Luke 8:7**.

But there is a triple strand running through the Bible which reflects the relationship of human beings to God, to each other, and to the created order. In this study, we seek to find and follow these strands and discover what the Bible has to teach us about what we call 'stewardship'. They can be summarised as **RESPONSIBILITY, RESPONSE** and **RESOURCES**.

Humanity is made responsible

IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

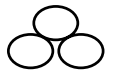
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Divide into to small groups. Each group should look at one of the following passages.

Genesis 1:16-28; Genesis 2:19-20

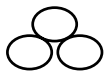


Come together, and share what these stories tell us about mankind's place in creation.



Conferring names in primitive society was thought to be an act of power and a demonstration of authority. In the earlier account God brings the creatures that have been made for the human to name. In the later account human authority is explicit; 'Let them have dominion'.

What does it mean to 'have dominion'?



How does **Psalm 8** illustrate the Old Testament interpretation of 'dominion'?



Psalm 8

'A little less than God ... crowned with glory and honour'. Although humans are created beings, they are set apart from and over all other earthly creatures. Humanity is given 'dominion' – God has 'put all things under his feet'.

But the Psalm was not sung to honour humanity; it was sung to the glory of God and it begins and ends with an ascription of praise to God:

'O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is Thy name in all the earth!'

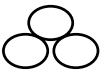
This precisely pitches humanity's place in the created order. Human beings are responsible to God for the earth which they were created to rule. Darwin wrote, 'Man has become, even in his rudest state, the most dominant animal that has ever appeared on the earth', but this is to say something entirely different from what the Bible says. The Bible says that humanity has been '**given** dominion'. It neither debases human beings as 'higher animal', nor deifies them with secular autonomy. It places us firmly 'under God'; but lifts us high as God's 'stewards' on earth.

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Hebrews 2: 5-11 and John 1:1-5



In the light of these passages, what new understanding do you now have of human 'dominion'?



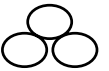
The New Testament is about a new Beginning, a new Creation 'born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God' (**John 1:13**).



What is essential new about the New Testament is Jesus himself. In Jesus all that was promised and hoped for, yet never realised in the Old Testament, is fulfilled (**Galatians 4: 4-6**); (**Hebrews 11: 13-16**). In Gethesmane he prays, 'Abba, Father ... not what I will, but what you will' (**Mark 14: 36**).

Mark 8: 27-31

How does Jesus see his sovereignty – as 'dominion', or as God's Messiah in terms of suffering and service (**Mark 10: 45**)?



Humanity is made for response

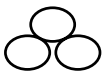
God acts – we react. The initiative is always with God, and we are made for response to God.

IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

What does **Deuteronomy 14:2** tell us about this relationship?



What is the role of 'God's People' as stewards of God's revelation?



What happens when people misuse their mastery, interpreting their relationship with God in terms of privilege rather than *responsibility*?

Deuteronomy 6:1-15 Deuteronomy 28:47-48



'Because you did not serve the Lord your God with joyfulness and gladness of heart ... you shall serve your enemies.'

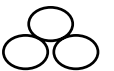
Our failure to respond to God in a responsible relationship, not just a completed contract, is a failure in our stewardship. It is grace, not law, that is at the very core of the biblical understanding of stewardship; the call to gracious living and grateful giving.

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

2 Corinthians 5: 21; 1 Peter 2: 21-24



In what way does Jesus' coming to 'save' humanity, reflect this understanding of 'stewardship' as 'relationship'?



Jesus accepts responsibility for humanity, even for their sin. The risen Jesus shows his disciples the nail marks on his hands and feet (**John 20:27**) as if to make plain that the way of the cross has been confirmed, not by-passed, by the resurrection.

Romans 8: 14-17 and Ephesians 4: 11-16



What Jesus did on the cross he did uniquely and alone; but he had frequently invited others to choose the same way, as the only way to real life. By his death and resurrection he set people free to make the choice. Through the coming of the Holy Spirit he empowered them to become his 'heirs', 'sons of God'. This is the 'stewardship' for which humanity was originally created, in the way which Christ (the prototype) has demonstrated.



'All must be continually offered to God, for all belongs to God, and men prosper only through God's goodness and mercy. This is what is meant to live by grace under the old dispensation.'

(John V Taylor 'Enough is Enough')

Humanity has the resources

The third stewardship cord is the more than adequate provision of resources for humanity.

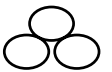
IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

**'While the earth lasts,
Seed-time and harvest, cold and heat,
Summer and winter, day and night,
Shall never cease.'** (Genesis 8:22)

God brings the Israelites to Canaan's land flowing with milk and honey' (**Exodus 3:8,17**), and even in their desert wanderings he meets their needs (**Exodus 16:2 ff.**).

What does the provision of manna reveal about dependence upon God making unnecessary 'anxious thought' about tomorrow's needs?

Although the Bible sees humans as 'resource-full' beings, richly endowed by God; but it has a realistic awareness that poverty and deprivation are also part of the human condition, and concern for the poor – especially for widows, orphans, and 'sojourners' who have no stake in the land – which is repeatedly required (**Deuteronomy 24: 19-21; 26:12-13; Isaiah 1:17; Malachi 3:5**).



The Biblical conviction is that God has more than adequately anticipated human needs; it is human greed, and human mismanagement, and above all the confusion of needs with wants (**e.g. Numbers 11:4-15**) which result in economic collapse and social changes. Needs are finite – wants are infinite.

We must never read into the Bible an austerity that is not there!

Deuteronomy 8:7-18

'You will never live in poverty, or want for anything' (**8:9**). It is not wealth or prosperity which the Bible condemns – but the attitude of mind and heart which is so often born in such conditions.



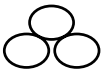
Abundant resources – and the proper stewardship of them is to enjoy them, develop them, be grateful for them, share them generously. And never to forget whom it is who gives them.

Psalm 21

The greatest resource of all is God himself. From Abraham, through Joseph, and Moses, and the prophets, all alike draw strength from the certainty that 'God is with them'. It is this conviction that determines their attitudes. So Abraham's 'stewardship' was to do the absurd. 'Surely I will be with you,' God assured Moses. Joshua is encouraged. David rejects Saul's armour. Jeremiah bought the deeds of land near Jerusalem when the city was falling into Babylonian hands. So many Psalms sing of nothing else but the total adequacy of God in every situation of human need such as Psalms 23, 40, 46, 62, 84, 103 and 121.

Isaiah 40:27-31

'They who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength....' God himself is The Great Resource: and stewardship of the resources which fails to reckon on the availability of God to strengthen, inspire and renew is like making up the petty-cash register while sitting in the vaults of Fort Knox!



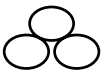
IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Mark 8: 34-37



The stewardship into which the new humanity is called is profound indeed: 'take up your cross'. It sounds forbidding; but we should remember that it was the invitation of the One who called God 'Abba' (**Mark 14: 36**) and taught his disciples to address God in the same intimate and personal way (**Matthew 6: 9**). Jesus spelt out this stewardship not in terms of law, but of grace. This isn't tiresome duty - this is eternal life!

To have stuck to routine (even religious duty) or to limit concern to your own circle is to miss out on life. In a very real sense those who choose the way of the cross to 'live happily ever after'.



Luke 6: 20-26

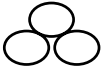
The Beatitudes seem to be making virtues out of very depressing necessities; but they describe the 'blessedness' of those who are living the costly, cross-bearing life of the Kingdom. Blessed are those who accept their humanity and know that to be truly human is to be responsible to God for one's neighbour and for God's world.

Luke 16:19-31

Matthew 25:31-46



'Inasmuch as you did it not to the least of these ... you did it not to me'. What parables teach us about our position of responsibility?



APPENDIX

The three strands we have followed are closely wound into a single thread in three key passages in the Epistles.



Romans 11:33 – 12:1

This passage more than any radiates the very spirit of stewardship. It sees God as all sufficient. Yet perhaps 'reasonable' is closest to Paul's meaning: the offering of 'our very selves' is the only 'logical' or appropriate response to such a God. Nothing less is adequate in response to the God who is 'Source, Guide and Goal of all that is'.

2 Corinthians 8:1-15 and 9:1-15



Both passages are required reading for anyone seeking to understand the stewardship of giving. Both are concerned with the collection which Paul is raising for the relief of the distressed brethren in Jerusalem, but they are more than appeals for money: they show what, fundamentally, stewardship is all about. For it is about grace – that great biblical word which speaks of God's attitude to, and actions for, humanity, and the response which humanity makes in gratitude and love for God. It is by grace that we are saved (**Ephesians 2:5, 8**). To live by grace – and to give by grace. This is what the Bible understands and teaches, and what we call 'stewardship'. Let's look at the passages in a little detail:

2 Corinthians 8:1-15 (RSV)

v.1 'We want you to know brethren about the grace of God shown in the churches of Macedonia'

Note the generosity of the Macedonians! It is the grace of God which has been revealed in them which Paul wants the Corinthian Christians to know about.

v.2 'abundance of joy and extreme poverty overflowed'

It is the paradox mentioned earlier. Joy must be a characteristic of stewardship if stewardship is to be Christian.

v.3,4 It was a 'free-will' offering! They asked to be included! The compulsion comes from within as their awakened desire to respond.

v.5 'they gave first themselves to the Lord and... to us'

v.6,7 'this generous (Greek *gracious*) undertaking'

Other translations lose the force of this repetition. The whole passage is about 'grace' not simply the generosity by which grace is manifested.

v.9 'the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ'.

Paul sets the invitation to contribute against the highest possible standard – the grace of Jesus himself. J S Stewart called this text 'the compass points of salvation'.

(N) 'He was rich' – pre-existent glory

(E) 'He became poor' – incarnation

(S) 'our poverty without Christ' – atonement

(W) 'our wealth through Christ' – salvation

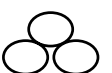
As the 'body of Christ' the Church feels with a special intensity the suffering of the poor, and the outrage of injustice. Christians are not alone in this concern, but their understanding of the stewardship entrusted to humanity makes it impossible for them to leave matters of social and economic justice to others. Christian stewardship can never be just a matter of a local Church's plans and programmes; it must have a world perspective. As the new humanity 'in Christ' the world is our parish, and those furthest removed from us are still our neighbours.

Luke 12:13-34

A man's life does not consist of the abundance of his possessions'. He's a fool says Jesus. Yet he is the classical type of successful man; spent a life-time making money against his retirement – and he's due for a coronary tonight. What a waste of living! How much wiser that stewardship which is 'rich towards God'. And how much happier! 'What does it profit a man to win the world and lose himself?'

Humanity is made for response

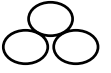
However, we are getting near to a moralising, legalistic, attitude. Responsibility ought not to be felt as an imposition, a duty to be done. Stewardship in the New Testament must be understood in terms of relationship.



Luke 15:11-32



If there are enough of you, divide into three small groups to represent the father and the two sons in the parable of the Prodigal Son. If, not consider each person briefly in turn. Ask yourselves, 'How do I relate to the other two characters in this story? How do they relate to me?'



What does this story teach as the essentials of good stewardship?

Matthew 25:14-30



The Parable of the Talents makes the same point. 'I knew you to be a hard man', says the third servant. What a contrast to the other two who betray not only a proper pride, but a genuine pleasure in having achieved something for their master. In each case the attitude was fundamental: in the one case no real relationship, in the other two cases, a relationship in which pleasure could be mutually given and received. 'Enter into the joy of your Lord'. So it is no use counting the talents, You cannot hide behind duty done or deserted. It is a matter of grace. You respond to God – or you do not.

Such generous love is above criticism, whether its recipient is the Lord himself or the poor whom we have with us always. This, and not the calculation of less or more, is what Christian stewardship is all about.

HUMANITY HAS THE RESOURCES

As in the Old Testament, the New Testament affirms the adequacy of the resources which God make available to us.

John 15: 1-8



Apart from Christ 'we can do nothing'. God himself is the Great Resource. 'I am with you always to the end of the world' (**Matthew 28:20**), promises Jesus. The New Testament witness is to the triumphant adequacy of the resources which God makes available to those who accept his invitation to be servants of Jesus Christ in his mission to the world.

The resources are there, the Bible insists, when we get our priorities right. First the Kingdom. Many today are recognising that "national malaise" is not essentially an economic matter, it is 'spiritual': it has to do with our 'spirit' as a people, and our confidence, or lack of confidence, in a living God who is able to provide for our *needs* (not wants!).

Matthew 7:7:11



The early Church inherited this confidence from Jesus. The promised presence of the Holy Spirit filled them with an astonishing certainty that they would always be given whatever was needed to fulfil their mission. They needed no reminding that 'the task ahead is never so great as the power behind'.

*'for the equipment of the saints,
for the work of ministry
and for the building up of the body of Christ'.*

Ephesians 4:12

Christian Stewardship needs to refer us, in the first instance, not to what we think we can do for God, but what God has done, and can do, for us.

*'I have known projects abandoned for lack of funds, but not
for lack of the gifts of the Spirit. Provided the human
resources are adequate, we take the spiritual; for granted.*

('The Go-Between God')

Discuss

Significantly it is those churches which have the confidence to look beyond the simply human to God, really believing that he provides resources for his people, and that he is himself accessible to them (**Ephesians 2:18**), which seem today to be facing most effectively the problems confronting many churches.



*God's gift, and man's happy dependence upon it, is the ground of the
theology of Enough. It is graciousness born of grace.*

(John V Taylor, Christian News-Letter)

2 Corinthians 9:1-15 (RSV)

- v.5 Though giving should always be 'free-will' it should not be 'extempore'. Responsible giving (as with responsible praying) needs to be thought about and prepared.
- v.7 This is a text which has suffered through familiarity. It says something essential about stewardship. God actually does love the cheerful giver- it is, we have seen repeatedly – the attitude that matters. Stewardship is not just a matter of

management – it is about gratitude, joy, response – the old-fashioned words ‘good cheer’.

v.12 The result: not only a successful appeal, but an ‘overflowing of gratitude to God’. It is grace that leads to generosity, and grace that is the consequence of generosity. It is a spiritual nuclear reaction! Graciousness born of grace.

v.14 Grace yet again. Their response will be a sign of ‘the surpassing grace of God’ in them, as it was in the Macedonians.

v.15 The alpha and omega of stewardship.

THANKS BE TO GOD FOR HIS GIFT BEYOND WORDS!

The foregoing have been chosen as passages which yield easily the way in which ‘stewardship’ was understood in the early Church. One other passage in **1 Corinthians** is worth looking at briefly.

1 Corinthians 15:51 – 16:1



Though the chapter ends at **v.58** Paul did not stop there. The chapter and verse divisions are, of course, artificial and were added much later. So Paul, having scaled the heights of spiritual vision in chapter 15 – ‘**Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ**’ – dipped his pen in the ink and wrote on ...

‘Now concerning the collection ...’

It is the same collection already referred to. But Paul sees no anti-climax here. J H Jowett preached a great sermon on this passage:

Truth and activity are related as springs and rivers. It we want the one to be brimming, we must not ignore the other. Beneficence will soon become thin and scanty if it does not take its rise in the hills. Begin with chapter 16, ‘Now concerning the collection’ and the result will be a forced and chilling artifice ...



(Is this what stewardship is often reduced to?)

..... you begin without momentum. Begin on the heights of chapter 15, and chapter 16 will emerge with the sequence of inevitable result. The collection is related to the resurrection, and if we hide and minimise the truth of the resurrection our beneficence will only be a spasm, a transient emotion, and not the full and sustained volume of the river of life That is our inclination and temptation. We try to make rivers, when sometimes in our lives ... (And our churches?) ... there is no hill country, no land of plentiful springs. ‘I will open rivers in high places’. And only when we have the ‘high places’ in our life the enthroned and sovereign truths of atonement

and resurrection, and the sublime and awful prospect of an unveiled immortality, only then will our life be a land of springs, musical with the sound of many waters, flowing the gladsome rivers to cheer and refresh the children of men.'

(J H Howett. 'Apostolic Optimism')

2 WAYS OF THE WORLD

The world is not my responsibility, it's too far away. However, we have to start somewhere – so this section chooses one theme, “**sustainability**” and four applications of that theme.

Probably the starting point for everyone is **Individual** sustainability. Discussion or decisions at this level then give credence to judgements made at the other levels of local, regional and national sustainability. This allows very concrete conclusions for actions rather than simple group theorising.

You may use the **Individual** section to open then choose some or all other sections in order or as appropriate to your group.

The local, regional and national sections are written within the context of a “Church” environment. They, of course, should be applied to employment, other voluntary bodies – indeed across all aspects of our life. Our Christian faith should be percolating outside of “Church”.

As governments talk about environment, energy and taxes so the Christian community could take an important lead.

Environment

We all have images of environmentalists. These can range from “lazy louts, who need to get a job” to “these people are idealistic heroes who do valuable work”.

What are your thoughts about such people?	Have they changed over the years?
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Some churches own huge tracts of land. Others occupy a small plot, others rent a room. Yet decisions on use of land and resources affect us all.

Does your Church, locally, regionally or nationally, have a policy on land use and sustainability? What we do is important - but how we do it is as important.



Jesus grew up in an area that was full of small farms of probably only five or six fields. However, these fields were spread around the area. Crops were cultivated where they grew best, with farmers' boundaries within the cultivated area marked by stones. This was not unlike the strip agricultural system operated at one time throughout many parts of the U.K.

Harvest was individually undertaken in the fields with assistance from whoever was around. "Gleaners" were then encouraged to scour the entire area for what had not been gathered. Due to the unsophisticated method used, the gleaners used to gather quite a substantial hoard. Gleaners were always from the landless poor – landowners could not be gleaners. The practice provided food and saleable produce for the poor as well as clearing the land for the next crop. The gleaners could not work without the system and the system could not work without the gleaners.

Modern communities have much to learn from previous models. It would be unrealistic to return totally to such models, but we can adapt and amend, to fit local and present circumstances.

One of the main areas where we can all do something is in the area of SUSTAINABILITY. Sustainability is using resources in such a way as to enable them to be used again or for them to last longer. As a Church we can do this at four different levels: **Individual, Local, Regional and National.**

INDIVIDUAL Sustainability

This is perhaps the easiest place to start. There are many areas. We have listed headings; you can complete the detail.

Inside the home	Garden
Transport	Recycling



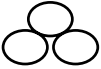
As a result of local campaigning bus services have been improved, railway stations built, bottle banks provided, composting facilities provided etc; even discounted energy.

If your list contains things that you would like to do, why not start doing them or start/join a campaign?

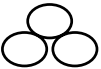
LOCAL Sustainability

A local Church should be an integral part of the community. Like Jesus we should be taking a lead. Taking a lead need not cost much. It could involve implementing the individual practices, which we discovered earlier within the Church premises. It could involve providing a venue for public meetings.

What could it involve for the Church that you attend?



What problems and benefits do you foresee?



REGIONAL Sustainability

We are now entering an area where “the media” perceives influence, but “the membership” begins to feel less involved.

Does the regional body of your Church hold meetings in public transport friendly places and at public friendly transport friendly times? Such a practice could be a start.

It is at this level of church that administration starts to creep in. What are the policies on recycled paper, computer cartridges etc? How do we contact the person who makes the decision about such matters?

It may be helpful to list office products that can be recycled

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Sustainability does not just involve commodities. It involves people. Does the vending machine stock “fair traded” products? Was this issue touched upon in your discussions under the Individual and Local headings?

Some churches administer land assets at a regional level. What do you think is good practice when land owned by the Church is occupied by others?

Should the Church provide grants to tenants who wish to convert to organic farming methods?



Engage in discussion with your regional Church body. Your comments could influence and improve policy. They may even cause a policy to be established. Many local churches have care of burial grounds, but regulations for use etc are decided at regional, or national, level.

It is possible to be imaginative with burial grounds without destroying a sense of dignity. Inclusion of local people (of all ages) in planning and looking after such areas enhances a sense of community. A frequently visited and appropriately tended burial ground reduces the scope for vandalism and increases scope for outreach. Such an area should be a witness to the care extended by the local Christian community.

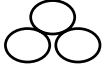
What is appropriate for your community? Devise an action plan, or make positive decision to retain the status quo, and present it to the Church or Civil authorities.



NATIONAL Sustainability

The issues already covered apply here. Invariably it is the National Church Leader who appears in the news. There are many National Church Leaders who are seen to have International influence.

If you were the national leader of your Church, what is the main issue touched on in this chapter which you would promote? How would you do it?



What has this got to do with the Gospel?.....

Who created everything?.....

To whom are we responsible?.....

Who allows us to manage what is his?.....

A prayer of Augustine of Hippo:

O Thou, who fillest heaven and earth,
Ever acting, ever at rest,
Who art present everywhere and everywhere art wholly present
Who are not absent even when far off,
Who with Thy whole being fillest yet transcendest all things,
Who teachest the hearts of the faithful without the din of words,
Teach us,
We pray Thee,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.



3 GETTING PERSONAL

“Don’t tell me, show me”

“One example is worth a thousand words”

“You can’t ask for something to be done if you are unwilling to do it yourself”

We are each of us familiar with such challenges. We have either heard them, or said them!

It is only right that if we are preaching responsibility on others to be good stewards, that we should be living the message ourselves.

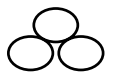
Christian Stewardship begins with **my** response; not simply as a tool with which to work on others; but to gain best understanding by experience.

GETTING Personal

One definition of Christian Stewardship is that we are trustees rather than owners. “The earth is the Lord’s”. God is the creator.

But we are given dominion over it, we are given authority, we are given gifts.

A gift is not temporary or conditional or hedged with rules. It is rendered freely. It is **mine** to do and use as I will. One of the greatest gifts is free will – to do as we choose. We are not factors of this on behalf of another. We own **that will**.



Christian Stewardship is, therefore, a freely willed acknowledgement of God, it is not a rendering of our account. It is a glad response to God’s gifts not a fresh set of rules.

So when we say, “**Christian Stewardship is what I do after saying I believe**”, we are making a far deeper statement and commitment than if obeying rules of management; or reporting our known duty; or accounting for our trusteeship.

How much we believe and therefore do, is transferred from a management or measurement question into a statement of faith. Christian Stewardship is not only a

response to situations and challenges it is an attitude to life and to God and it is freely chosen and determinedly taken.

That is what being a good steward is about. It is not living a dutiful life, a burden of duty, but a gratitude attitude to God.

This makes a great difference in our stewardship response since it is not a person drawing upon his or her resourcefulness or interest in response to the demands of other fellow believers. It is God himself laying claim to our whole life and it is in a response of thankfulness that we are practising stewards.

“A Good Steward Is One Who Spreads The Faith.”

The Christian is called to be faithful in their service. The original New Testament steward is defined as the manager of a household to whom the head of the house has entrusted his affairs. The Church is the household of God. Therefore, our stewardship is faith in action.

We have a responsibility to care for God’s goods. But what are these goods?

At the end of the creation story in Genesis, God makes man responsible for cultivating and caring for the earth. We may already be aware of our poor stewarding of what God has entrusted to us and of our need to act on behalf of those who have little means of response; the poor in our own country and abroad and those at special risk from rising sea levels and extreme weather. Stewardship is a word from God for the world of God.

We are stewards of the Gospel. The Bible makes this plain and Paul writes (1Corinthians :8 4) **“We have been made stewards, (or managers) of God’s secret truths and the one thing required of such a servant is that he is faithful to his master.”**



How Can I Change The World?

This starts in our own place and in our own life.



We can be involved in the ministry of small things which can lead to the ministry of greater things. Circumstances of life may have sapped our energy and enthusiasm and we have become insensitive or even bitter. Openness is replaced by fear and caution. We are reminded however, of the proverb “there comes a time when you have to go deeper if you want to go further.”



We should recognise that faithfulness in small matters can lead to a call to greater things.

We must start somewhere and so we look at our time, talents and possessions.

Time

Here is a conundrum, “you can’t stop it, store it, buy it, borrow it, or rent it.” What is it? It is ‘time’!

The psalmist complains, “**remember how short my time is**” (Psalm 89.47).

In today’s world we have timetables, timesheets, we say, “time is money, or time waits for no man”, we have clocks and digital timepieces, diaries. Yet we talk of passing the time, having spare time, even killing time.

C S Lewis in his book “The Screwtape Letters” counselled the apprentice devil that if he can get Christian to say “my time is my own” then he would be a successful tempter.

- In the Old Testament one tribe in twelve is seen as especially belonging to God: in the New Testament all men are seen as holy.
- In the Old Testament one day in seven is a holy day: in the New Testament all days are for pleasing God.
- In the Old Testament one part in ten is especially reserved for God: in the New Testament all income and goods are for God.

When we say “I don’t have the time” do we really mean “my priorities are different from God’s”?



We are looking for more good time keepers. Keeping it for God. Therefore, we must ask if the Church and our place in it is worth giving time.

Do we spend more time eating than praying? What priority do we give to the use of our time?



Talent

“Oh, I couldn’t do that”: “I’m no good at this”: “Don’t ask me”: “That’s not my line”: “I don’t have any talent”. And so on, and so on, and so on. What we are often saying is that we are good for nothing!

We should have no false modesty. It is not so much what we are good at but how willing we are to be committed. John Milton dictated profound poetry when he was blind; Beethoven was deaf when he composed many of his greatest works; Robert Louis Stevenson was in ill health most of his life and yet wrote thrilling and lasting literature.

It is said of D L Moody, the evangelist of the 19th Century, that he had no idea that he himself could teach but he devoted to God his one talent of being able to drum up recruits. Look at the Psalmist David, Martin Luther, William Booth, people who did what they could and were then led further by God.

Is that our fear? Of finding out that we can actively do something.

There are many spiritually unemployed in the Church. Are we included in that number? Dr Chalmers a 19th Century minister said that, “a man may be a blot or a blessing but a blank he cannot be.” The challenge is to provide *meaningful* service and challenge.

We are looking to be not merely earnestly receptive of the message but actively interested. We all have at least one talent – some knowledge of the good news about Jesus Christ and the gift of eternal life.

How can we share that talent and all the other gifts we have been given?

Giving

The ability to give is a gift in itself.

Paul writes to the Corinthians (**1Corinthians: 16.2**) about the regularity and the originality of the giving of money.

But when we talk about giving we are going far beyond the financial.

Why give, what is our motive?

- Answer, gratitude. Are you glad to be a Christian?



What effect does our giving have?

•Answer, it is a tool for mission to others – the use of our time, our talent, or our money. Many people are alive today because money has been available through a charity.

How do we measure our giving?

•Answer. By our willingness to give.

The right amount of giving - of time, energy or money - is decided by the right attitude. Let's live dangerously for Christ's sake.

What is the effect of such willingness?

•Answer. Joy. The Bible tells us that God loves a cheerful giver. How many of us smile when volunteering, how many of us laugh when involved in the work of God?

Pick the future against the past.

Choose your direction rather than being swept along by public opinion.

Let's use our gifts from God for God

Focus on the opportunities and not the problems.

Aim in life to make a difference.

It's not what you have but what you do with what you have that makes you happy or miserable.

4 CHURCH STEWARDSHIP

A major area for the practice of Christian stewardship is the local Church. Its money, buildings, people – how to manage them, improve them, realise their potential.

This may be people's only experience of the practice of Christian stewardship, when it affects their local church.

"Church" here does not just mean buildings. We are dealing not just with the past nor only with the future.

There will be a need to deal with hurt as well as with vision. Nevertheless entrenched positions must be attacked or defended with grace and truth rather than maudlin or dictatorial enthusiasm.

Household of Faith

The Church is the human expression in time and space of the divine economy. St Paul refers to it as the 'household of faith', which takes us immediately into the concept of the Steward as the servant of the household. This Stewardship, the care and concern for the well-being of the household of the Church, is part of the vocation of every Christian. Each one of us is called to reflect the love for the Church which lies at the heart of God himself; a love which was expressed most fully in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Lord of the Church.



This is something very different from being concerned with 'my church'. Our concern, our Stewardship, is of Christ's Church - the universal Church. We need always to remind ourselves of the breath of God's vision for his Church, which may be very different from our own. Perhaps at times we only continue because we believe and hope that this is the case.

IT'S SERVANTS: Who are they?

Read **Ephesians 4.11-12**



Is the distinction between clergy and laity particularly helpful?

Could it be better to look at the forms of ministry (pastoral, evangelistic etc) being exercised?



One Anglican bishop, when asked, 'What is the ministerial strength of this diocese?' Replied 'Approximately 39,000; that is the number of baptised people on our Electoral Rolls. Of these, approximately 1,300 have been trained and licensed for specific ministries, and 300 of these are ordained.'



The clergy

Almost every denomination is facing crisis. Numbers in training are not keeping pace with retirements, and in most denominations, the age profile of the clergy suggests that this will continue for at least the next ten years.

Increasingly, churches are seeking new, and more flexible, ways of matching clergy to churches. Increasingly, the cleric is being seen as an **enabler** of other people's ministries. But this poses major questions about the nature of the vocation and training of the clergy themselves.

Should we be asking the question: "Does this ministry prepare/equip the Church for service?"

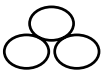


The laity

It can be helpful to remember that all the clergy are members of the laity – the *laos*, the people of God. We need to get away from a maintenance mindset; 'the Church is the only army in the world in which a small number of generals oversee the only regiment; the Pay Corps'

If we allow our stewardship to be limited to our financial giving, our vision is too narrow. The question which needs to be asked is:

"How does this ministry enable the Church to get out into the world with the Gospel?"



Individual roles need to be based on Spirit-giftedness. We need to proclaim, loud and clear, that:-



- no-one** is without a gift
- every Church** has all the gifts necessary for its mission
- all are called** to exercise their gifts for the good of the whole Church and community.

Teamwork

If the Church is the Body of Christ, there needs to be a 'central nervous system' to ensure its harmonious operation. All too often, it is assumed that because the

2. To what extent does the group meets its objective?

It doesn't have any objectives,
let alone meet them

Completely

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

3a. How much real progress did this meeting make

None

A great deal

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

3b. Who did what in the meeting which helped or hindered this process?

4. Were all the members able to contribute?

The meeting was dominated
by one or two people

All were able to
contribute

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

5. How 'tight' was the chairman's control

To restricting
And formal

What control?

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

6a. How well prepared for the meeting were participants?

Nobody seemed
Adequately prepared

All appeared well
prepared

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

6b. How could members be helped better to prepare?

7. How well was the time of the meeting used?

There seemed no plan – time
spent on unimportant
business and then we rushed

Important matters got
adequate time and we
finished at a planned time

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

8. How structured was the agenda?

Poorly

The order was appropriate and we knew the issues on each item

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

9. To what extent do people leave the meeting with a clear idea of what they have to do – and are committed to do it?

They don't and aren't

They always do and are

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

10. What were the best aspects of the meeting? How could we build on these? (Identify one or two key things we could do to improve our meetings)

What do your conclusions say about the way in which, in practice, you work as a team?



How does your Church manage conflict?

BUILDINGS

To most people in this country, the Church **is** the building. We may regard our buildings as an asset or a liability, a blessing or a curse, but for all of us they are a fact of life. In 2000, it is estimated that there are 48,547 churches in Great Britain; one for every 1,150 population. The average congregation will be 122 adults.

Why a building? (where two or three are gathered together...)

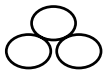
Apart from the climate, as anyone who has ever tried to organise an open-air service will testify, buildings can perform a useful function. From the earliest days, mankind has found a need for 'sacred space', and has set apart particular locations for religious ritual. (Gen 8.20). This is reinforced by ritual; and every denomination, whatever it may say, has its own 'rituals', often expressed in part through its architecture.



Different shapes and sizes

Whether we are talking about a simple Celtic cell, a house Church, a cathedral or a nineteenth century chapel, architecture influences liturgy and worship. We need to stand back, and be honest about the influence our buildings have on us.

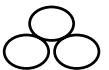
If your Church burnt down tomorrow, and all you could find to worship in was a disused car showroom, would it be an advantage or disadvantage?



What essentials would you want to save to use in your new home?

Buildings are often not just 'ours'; they are an integrated part of the architecture in the community. They have a symbolic value far greater than their worth to those who worship in them. They are a pointer to the enduring presence of Christ and His Church in the midst of society.

Many communities could be said to have 'too many Church buildings'. Is this true of your area? What are the barriers to a more rational use of buildings?



Upkeep

For all too many congregations, keeping a building in good repair is a major expense. What evidence there is suggests that, over a period of time, it will absorb about one-third of a congregation's income. Part of the problem is that, for a number of years, expenditure may be minimal; but every two or three decades, most Church buildings require major expenditure or tens, or even hundreds, of thousands of pounds.

What proportion of your Church's income was spent on maintenance last year; on average over the last 5 years; over the last ten years? Is the building regularly inspected by an architect? Who sees the report, and decides on a strategy for maintenance?



Greatest Curse

Lack of maintenance can turn minor problems into major ones with alarming ease! A leaking gutter, which could be repaired by a competent handymen in a couple of hours, can if neglected, turn into a several thousand pound bill for wet rot and re-plastering in a few years.

Lack of information

Most denominations have schemes to help with the maintenance of Church buildings. How does yours operate? Who is responsible for making the information widely and effectively known?

GENERAL RULE: Repairs and maintenance should be at the forefront of planning by the Officebearers.

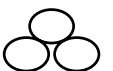
WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUR BUILDING IS LISTED!

- ‘Listing’ a building is an indication of its architectural or historical importance.
- The good news is that, under exceptional circumstances, it may help to open up a source of funding for the repair of your building.
- The bad news is that it will severely restrict any alterations you wish to make to the building, and often imposes additional costs as repairs have to maintain the historical integrity of the building.
- Many denominations operate their own version of Planning and Listed Building control, and so qualify for **Ecclesiastical Exemption** from the civil planning authority as it affects listed-buildings.
- If a building is listed, this will also affect it should it become redundant. Once it is no longer in use by the Church, it will become subject to civil planning control; this will almost certainly affect any future use, and therefore the value of the building when it is sold.

NEW BUILDINGS

There may be good reasons to contemplate a new building – an old Church which has reached the limit of economic repair; expansion to meet the needs of a growing congregation; a Church plant into a new housing area. Before you begin, consult as widely as possible – with the local community, as well as the congregation. Try to reach a consensus on what the building should provide – not just for your immediate needs, but for the future. Visit other new churches, and talk to people about the benefits and problems they have encountered in use. Use this experience in briefing your architect. It will be their job to come up with the best specification possible within your budget.

You may want a multi purpose building, available all week. This can give rise to problems over storage. Your local playgroup, guides, lunch club, youth group, etc, will **all** need somewhere secure to store equipment if they are to work effectively. If your design includes a Church Office, you will need to consider security for computers and other easily ‘liftable’ equipment. On the other hand, you do not want to put people off with a Church that looks like a prison!



Modern materials can mean big long-term saving; they often need less maintenance, leading to less drain on finances and lay manpower. It is better to spend on high quality at the outset rather than to upgrade later. Good design can make a major contribution to cutting running costs; insist, if possible, on the highest standards of insulation and efficient, low energy lighting and heating systems.

In some cases, movement of population may mean that an old Church building is no longer in a convenient location. It may be at a distance from housing areas, or cut off by modern road systems. A new, centrally located building could give greater ease of access for worshippers and other users.

Your denomination will almost certainly have specialists who can advise you on how to go about getting permission for a new building, and raising the funds to build it.

CLOSURES

Sometimes, the decision to close a Church is clear and obvious. A building which is becoming dangerous, and is beyond economic repair; a Church or chapel where the congregation has drifted away; in such cases, the rationale is self-evident. But, no matter how 'sensible' the decisions, it will still lead to considerable pain and distress, family associations'; burial grounds and community relationships will all come to the fore. Where a new, replacement building is to be provided, the exercise can be seen as a new step in mission. Even so, it can be hard to convince people who have become settled into familiar surroundings of the joys of becoming, once more, a pilgrim people.

There can be advantages; were a small congregation to move to another Church close by they may gain from strength of numbers, finance and talents, and bring enthusiasm, fellowship and maybe a fresh sense of purpose and direction to this Church as well as their own. This perception of change is perhaps, more true of our towns and cities than our rural areas, where roots are often much deeper.

A major factor is the future of building. Where it can be sold of Social Amenities/Social Welfare, especially if there is the possibility of future use on special occasions, the transition may be eased. It can be much more difficult when the building is converted for 'inappropriate' secular use; or where no alternative use can be found, and it is left to fall into desolation and become an eyesore in the community.

MISSION

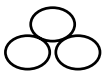
Your building is your 'shop window'; from it, passers-by gain their first impression of what you are like.

How strange that people who would be ashamed of dirty windows or peeling paintwork in their own house should accept it as 'normal' in the House of God.

"A building kept in pristine condition shows the outward sign of a 'healthy' congregation; parishioners go out in the community with increased enthusiasm and confidence to advance Christ's kingdom in the knowledge that new and lapsed members will be pleased to worship in such a fine building and take pride in believing and belonging." ("God's Fingerprint", Paul Scanton)

You need to ensure that your building is user friendly, both to the regular worshipper and to the first time visitor. Those with disabilities need special consideration; it is now a legal requirement that you must attempt as far as is possible, to offer the same standard of service to all.

Is your Church as warm and welcoming as your own home?



5 STEWARDSHIP IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

How do we intend to **act** in our stewardship?

With our members?

Within our community?

Will it affect our modes of worship?

Will it increase our money or spending?

What resources do we have for mission?

How are we to go about it?

Who will go for us?

(Many questions and sometimes many answers, which can be different from solutions!)

This section points to a way of putting foundations under our castles in the air. An opportunity to define Aims and how to achieve them, with some practical suggestions.

Introduction

In the Methodist publication: 'Sharing in God's Mission', the late Dr Donald English defined mission as '... any way in which Christians are sent to share in experiencing and expressing that love', (God's love for the whole creation). Each congregation has the responsibility to work out that mission in its own locality as well as on a wider scale.



That mission involves EVANGELISM because God wishes all humanity to know and love him. It includes SOCIAL CARING as evidenced in Christ's outreach to the poor and needy. It incorporates the STRUGGLE FOR JUSTICE in our society, for God intends all people to live together in peace. It reaches out to ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES because we are stewards of creation.



In order to fulfil this mission each individual in a congregation is needed to exercise his/her own particular gifts. This love for God, and the exercising of the gifts he has given us, is our discipleship. It is only when each person is living out the life of discipleship that true Stewardship is shown.

Biblical Resources

St Mark's account of the Feeding of the Five Thousand (Mark 6: 30-44) provides a model of congregational stewardship. Read the passage and reflect:



- The disciples were tired, the crowd were pressing.
- Jesus took them away to find a quiet place to rest.
- The crowd followed, so Jesus responded to them as always.
- Towards evening the disciples suggested sending them away – to find food in the farms and villages around them.
- Jesus said: 'YOU feed them!'
- They threw up their hands in horror and asked 'How?'
- Jesus suggested that they go among the people to discover what resources they had between them.
- They brought five loaves and two fishes to him.
- A miracle happened.*



God has a purpose (mission) for every congregation. He never asks us to do the impossible. It follows that the resources needed are already available within the congregation – or he will add what is lacking when his way is followed.



Defining Aims

This is done in stages, answering a series of questions:

1. Where do we stand now – how good are we at the very basic elements of our work- worship, prayer and caring?
2. Who are our people – who attends worship regularly/occasionally/never – and what is the age-profile (in blocks of ten years) of our congregation?
3. What is our collective vision for the future?
4. What are our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats?
5. What are our aims for the next two years?
6. Where is our community rejoicing? Where is it weeping? How do we 'rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep'?

Having defined aims, the stewardship programme invites people to find their 'points of entry' into the full life of the Church, sharing God's mission together. The involvement of every individual in the congregation means that the total ministry of the Church is multi-faceted.



One point that should not be ignored is that many people will already be working in voluntary capacities within the community. These need to be known, because what they are doing is part of the mission of the Church. They should be prayed for and supported in any necessary practical way.

Worship And Prayer

It should be possible to set up a worship-planning group to allow the use of relevant skills. The prayer-life of the Church should build bridges to those who do not attend worship regularly.

An Intercessions Book, available before each act of worship, allows the congregation to participate in services by placing prayer requests. This allows, in turn, an easy witness: 'We will pray for you in our Church on Sunday' – and a follow-up (perhaps a printed card) will sometimes draw people into the Church.

We can all pray, so the intercessions will inform of the personal needs for prayer during the week. The congregation become much more a praying people.

If someone visits each organisation using the premises during the week to ask for prayer needs, bridges can be built between where they are and the worship-life of the Church.

Worship could be revitalised without ever becoming 'outrageous', by the use of skills: music, dramatic readings, quiet music backing prayers etc. People enjoy contributing to an act of worship: carefully introduced, this can be a wonderful refreshing change.

How can you try to ensure that the members of your congregation share in worship, rather than attending a service?



Caring

All too often, caring is seen, and experienced, as 'doing things **for** people'. This can very easily become 'doing things **to** people'.

How do members of your congregation discover what opportunities exist for service in your local community?



Do you have structures (people responsible for a particular area, for example), and links (telephone/meetings) to ensure that care is offered?

Does your Church provide training to equip people with the skills they need for this ministry, locally or at a wider level?

In your Church and community, who cares for the carers?

6 MISSION, MONEY AND STEWARDSHIP

Mission frightens some, inspires others. Christian Stewardship is necessary for the spiritual good of the faithful. Recruitment to the kingdom is the aim of mission not numbers in the pew. This may be people's only experience of the practice of Christian stewardship, when it affects their local parish.

But how? Being realistic is often used as a "put down", but were Paul's journeys planned? Who paid for them? A round trip ticket or payment (in cash!) at each stage?

Mission even today, is supported by prayer, commitment, money.

Who is going on mission? How are they supported? What resources do we supply?

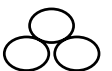
Mission

Mission involves discipleship, and discipleship implies the exercise of Christian stewardship.

Money is the simplest of the resources of a Church to understand and the giving of the money can be the most effective measurement of the success of the teaching of Christian Stewardship.

Unbalanced

In practice many congregations find themselves dismayed by their difficulties, particularly the lack of finance. Quite often this leads to a *disproportionate amount* of time and effort being spent in raising income. Sometimes the result is that the teaching and practice of the traditional duties of members – of worship, prayer, involvement, learning and giving – are neglected. A healthy attitude to giving of money is vital.



Stewardship and Money

Stewardship is more than giving money. This is not to imply that money is not important; that money should not get prime attention and that money is somehow unholy, unspiritual and not worthy of serious consideration by Christians.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Stewardship and money are related. The proper relationship should be understood. Stewardship, like mission, is one of those Christian terms with a narrow as well as a broader definition.

In its narrow sense stewardship means a set of activities which will motivate Christians to share the resources God has given them; in particular, teaching them to give of their money *in thanksgiving* for God's continual giving to them.

In its broader sense, stewardship is everything a Christian is and does. It is how the Christian responds to his/her creator by using his time and talents as well as money.

Ultimately it has to do with sharing with others what has been entrusted to us, responding to the God who never ceases to give.



Giving to God

In this key way we share in the mission of the Church, by giving money *back to God through the Church*. This in turn is used for the work of the Church locally, nationally and internationally.

Giving money is a theological matter because it has to do with God as the source of our life and with Jesus Christ as the source of our redemption.

The Bible and Money

Money is such an important topic in the Bible that it is *the main subject of nearly half the parables* Jesus told. In addition, one out of every seven verses in the New Testament deals with the topic.

To give an idea how this compares to other topics, scripture offers about five hundred verses on prayer and fewer than five hundred on faith, while there are more than two thousand verses on money!

Now that Jesus Christ has come into our lives He wants to be Lord (in command) of every aspect of it. That includes our finances. Martin Luther observed, "There are three conversions necessary: the conversion of the heart, the mind and the purse (or wallet)".



When we experience this "conversion of the purse" and give freely in thanksgiving, of our finances to the Lord, we will make the best investment possible - *an investment with eternal dividends*.

Because We Believe

Nowhere in the scriptures does it say that a Christian should give money to the Church only if the treasurer can show financial statements to justify the need for giving. Why then do we persist in spelling out the needs as the basis of our Christian giving? St Paul was quite clear in insisting that giving cannot be based on needs.

He states that stewardship is a matter of returning to God, regularly and sacrificially, a portion of the money and possessions we have – *simply because we believe*.

Grow In Discipleship

True stewardship lies in continually giving back to God in gratitude for all that He has done, is doing and will do.

It is not so much that a 'needs' approach is wrong, just incomplete. When we base our appeal financially (however godly the needs are) it hinders any serious consideration of giving as a matter of a person's spiritual life; a serious matter between a Christian and God; a chance to grow in discipleship.

Basic Needs

We need to give just as we need to worship, to pray, to ask for forgiveness, and to be forgiven. These are basic universal religious needs. We must approach the problem positively and work out not just what we can do, but *what God wants us to do*.



Spiritual Good

The basis of the best giving programmes is the need of the giver to give, rather than the need of the Church to receive. Whatever views one may have about bazaars, garden parties or the lottery, envelopes or covenants, the principles of Christian Stewardship are necessary for the *spiritual good of the faithful*, and only incidentally for the material welfare of the Church. This thankful offering will draw the giver nearer to God, and will enrich and deepen the whole of life, in worship, in work, in prayer, in sacrament, in leisure, in service to others.

The Bible says:

This is not only a contribution towards the needs of God's people; more than that, it overflows in a flood of thanksgiving to God. (2Corinthians 9:12)



Leaders

Church leaders need to understand that money is a positive word. Wise use of money and thoughtful teaching on giving is *a way of proclaiming the Gospel*. We need to hear more about giving – not only at times of financial crisis.

Sadly it is often the immediate financial needs of the Church which concern us and that is the message which members hear loudly and clearly and to which they assume they are being asked to respond.

Be Realistic

Giving needs to be relative to income. Some will give £2 per week, others £20 or £50 per week. All giving according to means.

Have a Measure

We need to check our giving against some standard. Try 5p in the £1. This means that out of each £1 of our income we keep 95p for ourselves and give 5p to God through His Church.

Dare I Keep

“How much dare I keep” rather than “How little dare I give” might be one way of thinking, whether it be of skills, of goods for redistribution to others, or of cash.

In A Nutshell

Today we render taxes to Caesar and too often do not see the need to render the same kind of tribute to God. Sacrifice to God in order to have any real meaning, cannot only be made in spiritual terms. We need to sacrifice to God in the same terms in which other sacrifices are made, for schools, holidays and family. In terms of money as well as in more spiritual ways.



Money dominates so much of life, care anxiety and thought. God must be brought into this or it will destroy us, making us materialistic even in our own charity.

We want to see value for money in giving but somehow or other, even with money, we must make an *act of faith in God*. We can only achieve that by giving sacrificially to God without strings, leaving Him to achieve with it what He wants.

If we can bring faith into what affects us most closely and money does that, our faith is enhanced where it is at present most absent.

Finally

Giving is a Godly Business, it's part of the Christian Package!

We give because we have been

- given the faith to respond to a generous God
- given the brains to think and bodies to work
- given lives to lead and each other to love
- given a Christian community and a world to care for
- given the promise of life after death though the resurrection of Jesus Christ.



The money is used for ...

Mission

providing for others
providing for clergy
providing worship
providing comfortable buildings
and to be witnesses for God.



CONCLUSION

And now

“Go and do the very same....” said Jesus Christ

After all the teaching, discussion, argument, misunderstanding....

What now? Further talk? More meetings?

Planned action – that’s what!

- What is our **aim**?
- Not what’s **next**?
- What are the demands?
- How can this be fitted into the schedule?
- Where will we get the resources?
- When will we get the time?

Why didn’t we think of this before? Planned Action!

The approach is straightforward... Ask yourself or your church leaders -

- What is our Aim?
- Where do we want to be with our people, parish, group?
- How can we get there to achieve the agreed Aim?
- What are the problems preventing us carrying out our objectives and achieving our Aims ?

Don’t spend too long on these constraints, move on to ...

Ideas – on how to achieve these aims!!

Finally, prioritise your (long?) list of ideas and suggestions

Decide who is to action the aims, when and in what time scale

If we accept that Christian Stewardship is what we do after saying ‘we believe...’ then something should happen after all the study and discussion with this Workbook.

Denominations’ central offices will have customised stewardship programmes or ways of helping achieve our chosen aims.

And now ...

call together the leadership team and begin...

“What is our Aim”...