



Stewardship

Christian stewardship is a way of living in which we recognize that everything belongs to God. It is the way we look at the world when we become a disciple of Jesus Christ. At its heart is the recognition that all that we have and all that we are is a gift from God.



What is Stewardship?

A steward is someone who handles affairs for someone else. In ancient kingdoms, stewards ran the country in the absence of the king. Upon the king's return, the steward gave a full account of their actions. Even when the king was present, the steward often handled the daily affairs of the kingdom. However, a steward did not own the kingdom and the king determined when and how long a steward would serve him.

We are stewards of all that God has given us, including our time, our abilities, our possessions and our money. Stewardship begins when we say the words 'I believe!'; or to put it another way, stewardship is a part of our spirituality and a way of life, in which we seek to use all that we have to continue the mission of sharing the good news of God's Kingdom.

Stewardship in Kirk

How does stewardship look in your church? Think about how you use your buildings, the money given and the abilities within the congregation. Is there a clear path in your church to help people take steps in their faith? Are you empowering the people of God to do God's work? Are you developing leaders? Is your church growing spiritually and in numbers? Hopefully your church is well resourced in its worship, vision and mission, and those resources are well managed by the office bearers.

In case there arise needs for help, the Church of Scotland's Stewardship consultants can provide expertise. The consultants work in different parts of the country providing assistance and advice to churches in all of our Presbyteries.

National Stewardship Programme

The National Stewardship Programme, launched in 2011, has been providing diverse opportunities for individuals and congregations throughout Scotland to respond to the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Working along with the stewardship consultants, churches have been engaged in a number of imaginative programmes: e.g. making films all about the congregational life and witness and then



presenting them at a large gathering of the congregation, developing how to creatively invest or re-prioritise time in the matters of God, how to shape the church by abilities within the congregation, etc. Many churches are also doing a programme that aims to enable people to review their financial giving.

Financial giving is challenged primarily through the 'Giving for Growth' programme. The best results from this programme are clearly visible when a stewardship consultant is working alongside a church to provide encouragement and guidance. Churches working with a consultant tend to see, on average, a 15% increase in their income. This programme does not place any demands on elders to visit people in their homes and talk about money. It culminates in a celebratory event (your consultant will help you to plan) which simply demonstrates to people the impact their generosity has brought locally, nationally and globally. People tell us that they enjoy the programme. Here is one of stories shared by congregations that took this programme:



The 'Giving for Growth' outreach to the congregation exceeded all our expectations and demonstrates what can be achieved if sufficient effort is made in the planning stage and full use is made of the material and free consultancy provided by the Church of Scotland.

We now have 50 new donors and have achieved an annualised increase in WFO and standing orders of £31,600 which represents a remarkable increase of 32%. We also enjoyed the opportunity to meet together at a series of 'Gatherings' where members of the congregation could see first-hand the influence of the church on the wider community in Kilmacolm, and where our Minister outlined his vision for the future. The fellowship enjoyed at the meetings and the financial result achieved, provide great encouragement for us all.

Kilmacolm Old Kirk.

The consultants not only bring expertise in raising income, but they also provide imaginative ideas for your church on how to invest time or abilities through the Stewardship Seasons programme.

Christian Giving as Gratitude to God

Christian giving springs from faith. Unlike other forms of giving, Christian giving is first of all an act of worship and the basis of all true worship is gratitude to God. The worshipper in the Old Testament brought thanksgiving with their sacrifice (Psalm 50.23). The worship in the New Testament church was described as 'always giving thanks to God the Father for everything' (Ephesians 5.20). The early Christians named their most sublime act of worship, the reception of the body and blood of their Lord, εὐχαριστία (*eucharistia*), meaning 'thanksgiving'. And, when they envisioned worship as it was to be in heaven, they saw the redeemed giving glory, honour and thanks to the one who sits on the



throne (Revelation 4.9). Giving that is prompted by gratitude for the goodness of God is a beautiful thing.

We worship a generous and gracious God, which is most clearly revealed in Christ's self-giving sacrifice on the cross. When we have a deep awareness of God's generosity, it connects with our souls and impacts upon us in such a way that we want to respond. We come to desire to be extravagant in our praise, in our offerings, in our service and in our time. As Zacchaeus was touched by Jesus, his response was one of extravagance; he gave away half of this wealth to the poor and returned four times what he had stolen. As a hymn declares, 'Love so amazing, so divine, demands, my soul, my life, my all'.

How can the Stewardship and Finance Department help your congregation in its generosity?

We would like to see the National Stewardship Programme on the agenda of every Kirk Session meeting and every Presbytery meeting. The Church of Scotland has a hard working team of consultants who are passionate about their faith and have a wealth of experience in helping churches consider how they 'give'. They work alongside churches equipping the congregations with resources, sharing ideas which have proved fruitful for other congregations, and encouraging them to find the appropriate stewardship message for their situation and parish. There is no cost to churches for the services of a consultant. The Stewardship team is eager to help local churches take a creative approach to stewardship.

Further reading and resources

John Muir, *The Wilderness World of John Muir* (edited by Edwin Teale: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2001).

Douglas John Hall, *The Steward - A Biblical Symbol Come of Age* (New York: Friendship Press, 1982).

Red2Black prayers, teaching notes and children's activities from 'Stewardship' -

www.stewardship.org.uk

Church of Scotland National Stewardship Programme –

www.churchofscotland.org.uk/resources/subjects/national_stewardship_programmes

National Stewardship Programme raising funds resources -

www.churchofscotland.org.uk/resources/subjects/national_stewardship_programmes/raising_funds_resources