

The Pillars of Parish Stewardship

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF WICHITA

The Pillars of Parish Stewardship

Prepared by
Office of Stewardship
THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF WICHITA
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A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S

The Catholic Diocese of Wichita, the Diocesan Office of Stewardship and the members of the Diocesan Stewardship Committee wish to express their sincere appreciation to Renee Allerheiligen for her tireless efforts to bring this manual to fruition. Her embrace of stewardship as a way of life is an inspiration to all who know her. The members also thank Fr. John Lanzrath, a priest of the Diocese of Wichita, for his editing of the final draft of the manual.

May God, who has begun this good work in the words contained herein, bring it to completion in the response of dedicated and committed stewards, who give the most important gift of love – the gift of self.

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INTRODUCTION

Stewardship: A Grateful Response to God's Love

GOD REVEALS HIS PERFECT AND INFINITE LOVE FOR US MOST VISIBLY IN HIS SON, JESUS CHRIST. A STEWARD MAKES GOD'S LOVE VISIBLE BY IMITATING JESUS. AS THE UNITED STATES BISHOPS WROTE IN THEIR PASTORAL LETTER, STEWARDSHIP IS THE RESPONSE OF THE DISCIPLE TO GOD'S UNCONDITIONAL LOVE FOR US. STEWARDS BASK IN THE WONDER AND AWE OF GOD'S LOVE. THE MORE DEEPLY ONE GROWS IN LOVE FOR GOD, THE MORE ONE GROWS IN HEART TO SEE STEWARDSHIP AS A WAY OF LIFE, A WAY OF LOVE, IMITATING GOD'S LOVE FOR US. STEWARDS SEE EVERYTHING GOOD AS GIFTS RECEIVED FROM GOD AND THEY RESPOND IN GRATITUDE WITH THE GIFT OF SELF.

THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM CALLS CHRISTIANS TO A LIFELONG VOCATION OF DISCIPLESHIP AS CHILDREN OF GOD MADE IN HIS IMAGE AND LIKENESS. STRENGTHENED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT, WE ARE CALLED AS DISCIPLES TO FOLLOW JESUS TO GROW IN HOLINESS BY THE GRACES GOD SHOWERS UPON US. AS RECIPIENTS OF GOD'S LOVING GRACE, OUR HEARTS LEAP WITH GRATITUDE. *"How can I repay the Lord for all the good He has done for me?"* (Psalm 116:12).

To imitate the love of Jesus Christ is a most challenging task. In our human nature, this is not possible. Yet, we have not first loved God. God has first loved us. By opening our hearts to receive this gift of God's love, we begin to love in a way that transcends our human nature. This call to love is not just a feeling of love, but rather, it is a decision to love. *"Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."* (I Corinthians 13:7). The disciple perseveres to love through all stages of life. To love may be very difficult at some stages and easier at others. But we do not walk this journey of life alone. Without question, Jesus' model and commandment was to love and grow in holiness. *"Love one another. As I have loved you, so you should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."* (John 14: 34-35).

Stewardship is a conversion journey of receiving God's love and returning love to Him. A conversion requires prayer, reflection and time to allow God to show us who we are, and the person of love that we can become. Throughout the conversion experience, the disciple yearns to change and grow into the person God created them to be - a steward uniquely His own, but united in one Body through Jesus Christ. Stewardship transforms lives because of its love, and it is in this transformation process and conversion journey towards love that we give new life to the Church. *"If you wish to come after me, you must deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me. For if you wish to save your life you will lose it, but if you lose your life for my sake you will save it."* (Luke 9: 23-24)

The famous Christian author, C.S. Lewis, once wrote, *"A person whose hands are full of parcels cannot receive a gift."* Today, one of the spiritual evils facing our nation is a growing materialism and consumerism. When one holds so tightly to material possessions, one cannot receive the spiritual gifts that God wishes to give to His beloved children. God transforms a steward beyond mere human kindness to a love of sacrifice and detachment, enabling the steward to continually receive God's gifts. When a steward loves God above treasured earthly possessions, God provides the grace for the steward to love to an even greater depth. This depth of love is a growth in holiness. This is one of the joyful rewards of a stewardship way of life.

In the deepening conversion of love, the steward learns to give of self through time, talent and treasure, not out of obligation and duty, but out of sincere desire. The steward recognizes within the very nature of the human person, an inherent need to give. For the steward, this way of life and giving of love becomes as natural as breathing itself.

The conversion to stewardship as a way of life is a journey of the individual, the family, the parish, the diocese and the Universal Church. What makes such conversion possible? As stated above, it is God's love for us that lies at the heart of such conversion. *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him might not perish but might have eternal life."* (John 3:16). It is God's desire that we have life. Jesus came to give life and to give it abundantly, (*cf. John 10:10*). Jesus Christ is the foundation of the stewardship way of life. He is the capstone of the structure.

With Jesus as the foundation, there are certain elements that need to be in place within the parish structure, which enable parishioners to convert to a stewardship life through the giving of self in time, talent and treasure. This manual identifies those pillars that rise from the foundation of Jesus Christ. Recognizing that this conversion is primarily a call from God made possible through grace He bestows upon us, the task of conversion to stewardship is part of our response to discipleship.

God is love. It is in love that this manual is offered to those who wish to grow as stewards. Together in our journey of faith, may God bless us and may we respond as faithful disciples - faithful stewards.





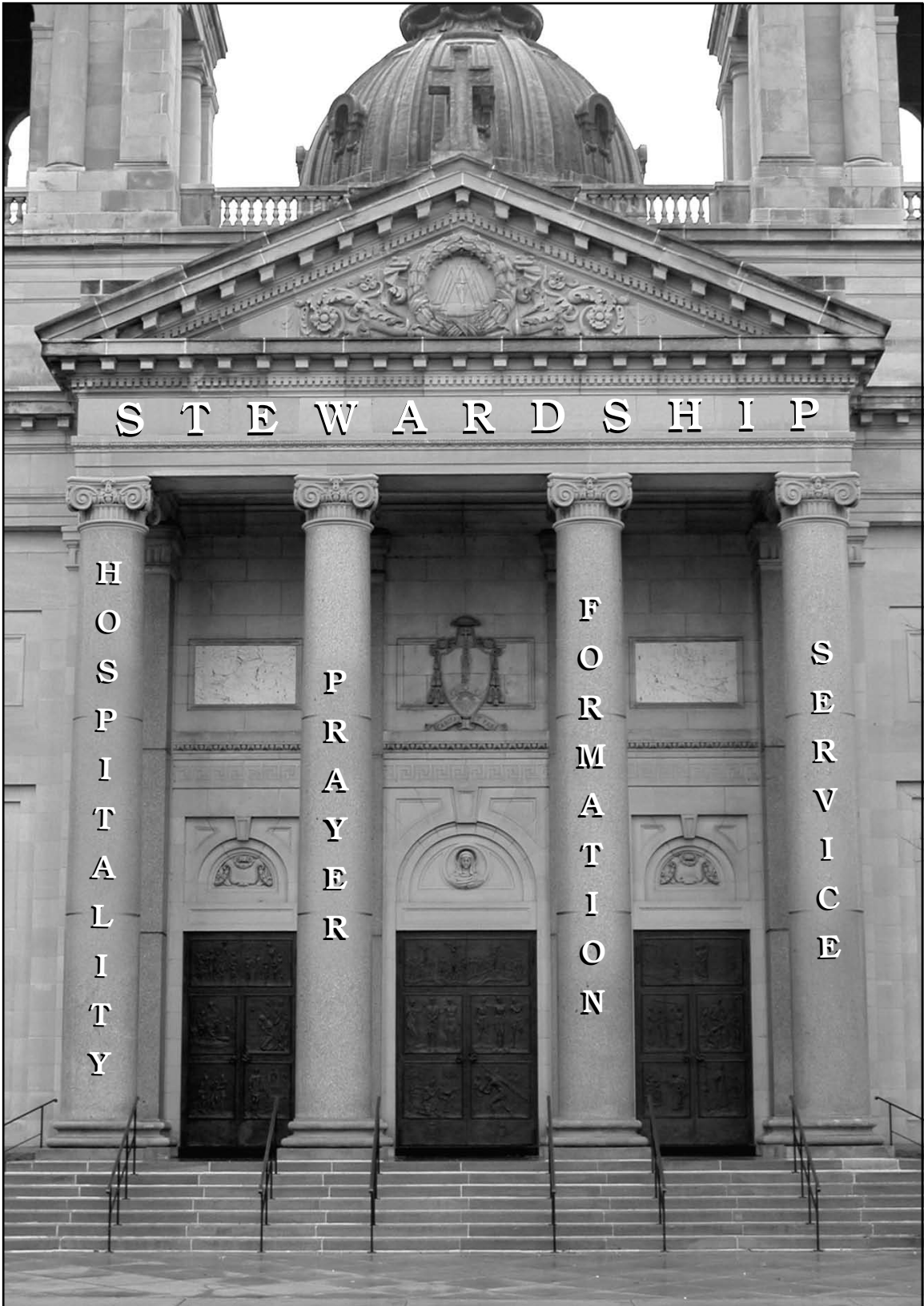
THE PILLARS OF PARISH STEWARDSHIP

This manual seeks to assist members of stewardship committees, pastoral councils, pastors and parish leadership as together they seek to develop, design, implement, and renew a successful stewardship way of life in their parish. This manual also identifies important building blocks within, under and around the “pillars” to assure there is a sound structure in place.

The four pillars of hospitality, prayer, formation and service invite parishioners to experience, witness and live the stewardship way of life in response to their baptismal call to discipleship. Individually, each baptized person is called to give of time, talent and treasure to strengthen these four pillars that support the parish community. Conversely, by making our parishes places of hospitality, prayer, formation and service, we provide greater opportunities for the sharing of time, talent and treasure.

Throughout this manual, a continued emphasis is made upon a parish having a focused attention to its defined mission. Without such direction and pastoral planning, parish stewardship as a way of life becomes haphazard at best. With a clearly defined mission, the parish establishes standards for evaluating all parish activities and ministries in relation to fulfilling the mission of the parish pastoral plan. The pillars defined in this manual seek to convert the hearts of individuals and the wider parish family to make stewardship a way of life for the entire parish, as the parish family seeks to live its defined mission. Individual parishioners are better able to commit generously and sacrificially their gifts of time, talent and treasure to support the parish mission when hospitality, prayer, formation and service are vibrant within the parish life.

As a parish embraces stewardship as a way of life, the members of the stewardship parish recognize their responsibility not only to their own parish, but also to the diocese, the community and the Universal Church. Strengthening the pillars of hospitality, prayer, formation and service make us faithful disciples to the love given us freely by our loving God. As faithful stewards, our only response to these gifts received is gratitude. Living stewardship is a disciple’s response to our God, who has given us everything that is good!





The Parish Mission Statement

A parish mission statement provides a focus giving direction to the pastoral planning of a stewardship parish. People want to know where they are going and how to get there. Through the creation and use of a mission statement, parishioners energize themselves and become more actively involved, following a common direction. The mission statement also allows evaluation and accountability to occur.

Creating a mission statement is typically the function of the pastoral council in conjunction with the pastor. These parish leaders identify the needs of parishioners as they journey on their spiritual path to holiness. An established and functioning stewardship committee is also a valuable resource in the development of a parish mission statement.

Once a mission statement is written as a result of intense prayer, needs analysis, parishioner input, and discernment it is wise for the parish to have goals and objectives that seek to put the mission into practice. These goals and objectives form the vision that allows the mission to become a lived reality. *“Where there is no vision, the people perish.”* (Proverbs 29:18). The shared vision, especially of parish leaders, is essential so that the mission statement does not remain simply words on a sheet of paper. The vision, goals and objectives comprise the bulk of the pastoral plan. If there is no parish-wide mission statement in place, individual parish ministries could create their ministry’s own mission statement with the pastor’s approval.

It is important to form and educate all parishioners, particularly parish leaders, about the parish mission statement so that they can work in their respective organizations and collaborate with others in implementing the parish mission. Within the pastoral plan, objectives and goals of each parish ministry are defined.

The mission statement of the parish should be visible in the parish. This can be done by posting the mission statement prominently in the facility, the bulletin, newsletter, parish website, meeting agendas and other forms of communication.

Listed are the resources to help you formulate a parish mission statement:

Pastor: The pastor leads the process in conjunction with the pastoral council and his parishioners. He is also the key communicator of the process.

Pastoral Council: The pastoral council consults the pastor on the mission statement. The pastoral council conducts the necessary needs analysis of parishioners to develop a representative mission statement. Note that this assumes that a parish has a solid and working pastoral council in place that is truly representative of the parish.

Needs Analysis: To obtain a true understanding of parishioner needs and to ensure that the vision and pastoral plan is representative of the parish, a needs analysis conducted through parish surveys, focus groups, town-hall meetings, and study groups/listening sessions is most helpful. This effort revitalizes parishioners as they see a concerted effort to acknowledge and meet their needs.

Pastoral Planning: The mission statement of the parish provides the focus for development of goals and objectives to fulfill the vision of the parish. The mission statement, goals and objectives constitute a pastoral plan.

Goals: The goals and objectives of the pastoral plan should be communicated appropriately through leadership training to all parish ministry leaders. Training helps ensure the plan is put in motion by the key implementers – the parish leaders. Established timelines for these goals are also helpful.

Consensus: Consensus is a general agreement by members of a group on opinion, position or proposal. The essence of consensus is: 1) coming to a common understanding of a position; and 2) agreeing with validity on that position. Individuals may see their own position as more valid than the group position, but they are open enough to see the merit of the group-supported position. Consensus differs from majority votes or compromise, which often results from mutual concessions. Decisions drawn from consensus based on the mission statement and the goals and objectives are often more prudent and accepted than other forms of decision-making processes.

Structure: A parish structure incorporates a visible, workable process that allows the Pastoral Council and all parish ministries to communicate effectively and carry out the mission statement of the parish. Structure varies in size and context depending upon the demographics and needs of the parish.

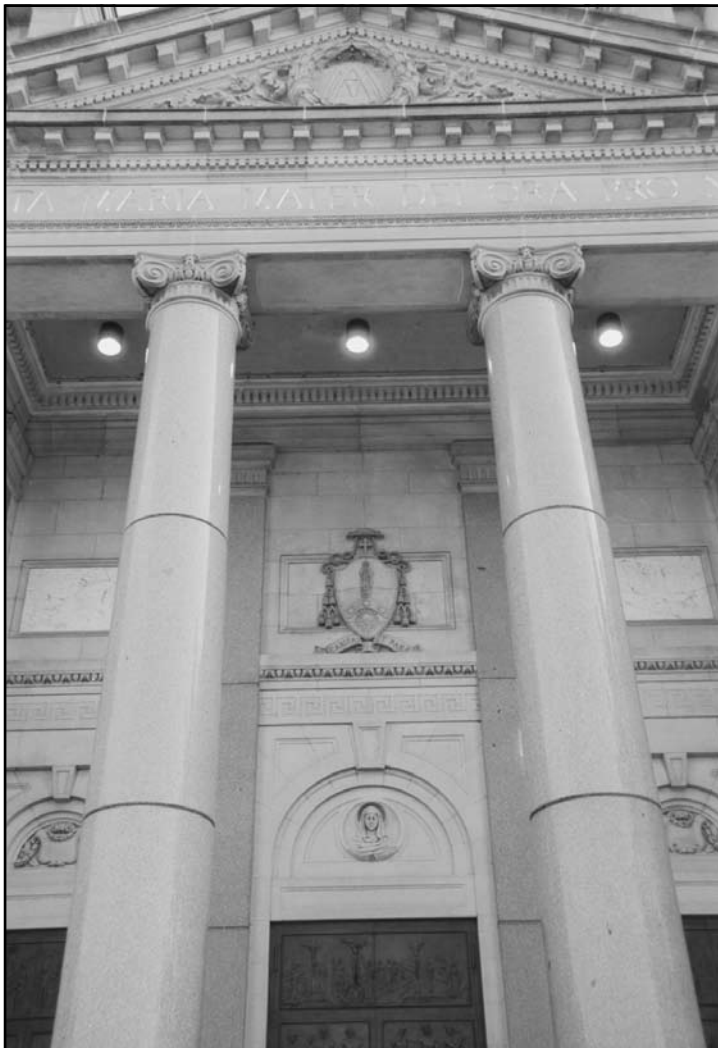
Renewal: A coordinated, vibrant stewardship renewal process will lead parishioners to follow the unifying mission statement for the parish. Utilizing the structured stewardship renewal process provided by the diocese is an effective way to conduct a stewardship renewal. A coordinated and vibrant renewal process include the following elements: witness talks, descriptive time and talent forms uniquely customized for each parish, gift of treasure discernment forms, dissemination of the feedback from the time, talent and treasure forms to committees, and personal contact by parish committees to parishioners.

Evaluation: Pastoral planning allows for each parish ministry, along with the pastoral council, to evaluate their progress in attaining the goals identified in the plan. Because there exists an accountable measure, ministries can better see what adjustments need to be made, if any, to meet the identified goals.

Building a Stewardship Parish on Four Pillars:
HOSPITALITY, Prayer, Formation and Service



Hospitality



“When I was a stranger, you welcomed me.” (Mt. 25:35). Jesus Christ teaches that whenever we welcome one of the least of our sisters and brothers, we welcome Christ Himself. Parishioners of a stewardship parish seek to see the face of Christ in one another. With special vigilance, parishioners must seek out and welcome new members to the parish family. A stewardship parish is a welcoming parish regardless of the parish demographics: large or small - urban, suburban or rural.

We are all prodigal children longing to be welcomed home. In a hospitable parish, parishioners and guests feel they belong and are appreciated. This is especially true if they were ever absent from the church. Hospitality leads to a sense of ownership among parishioners. This ownership and personal involvement fosters a sense of “belonging.” When parishioners experience a warm and sincere welcome, they in turn become open to give themselves to others. God is love. God gives His love to each one of us. As God loves us, He calls us to love one another. This Divine Love flows through the heart of the faithful steward to love others. When we are recipients of such love from others, we are attracted to follow this example. When others welcome us, we are open to welcoming others. This desire to welcome others is yet another gift of God. The most vibrant stewardship parishes are those in which parishioners know they are welcomed, which fosters a sense of ownership and personal involvement in lived stewardship to the parish family.

Listed below are some of the “building blocks” parishioners might consider as they seek to build and maintain a parish of hospitality and welcome:

Pastor: As shepherd of the flock, allowing time for the pastor to meet and come to know his parishioners is an essential element of hospitality. Creating opportunities before and after Mass for the pastor to greet parishioners as well as special events like quarterly welcoming gatherings of new parishioners will help a pastor and parishioners become acquainted with one another.

Pastoral Planning: When establishing goals and objectives for the parish, the involvement of both new parishioners and veteran members should be considered in the effective implementation of these objectives. Seeking new ways to improve hospitality and welcome to all members of the parish family is itself a sign of vibrant parish hospitality.

Invitation: Whether a new or long-standing member of a parish, parishioners need to be invited to serve in the most personal way possible. It often takes more than one invitation before a parishioner decides to become involved, so perseverance is important when we invite people. Parishioners who are quiet can be misinterpreted as disinterested. Understanding that people often receive information in different ways, varied forms of invitation are necessary. Bulletin and pulpit announcements, personal invitations, personal phone calls, and visits by members of the welcoming committee are effective tools. Noticing a particular talent or gift of an individual parishioner and personally inviting that person to share that gift with the parish family is most effective. Above all, we must persevere in our efforts to invite all parishioners to recognize the gifts given them individually by God and to ask them to share those gifts for the good of the parish family and the wider Church.

Called by Name: Because we are a parish family, it is important to know our fellow parishioners by name—even in the largest parishes. No doubt that this is a challenge for all of us. But we know from our own personal experience, that when we are called by our name by other parishioners, we no longer exist anonymously in the parish. At Baptism, when we become children of God, we are called by name! Updated parish pictorial directories are very valuable tools to allow us to know one another. Taking the time to study these pictures and then to leave our “comfort zones” to initiate conversation with

these parishioners when we see them at a parish function is one of the most dynamic ways of establishing hospitality and welcome. The welcoming committee of the parish has a special responsibility to model this for other parishioners.

Communication: Consistent, continual, updated, friendly and clear communication of parish events in the bulletin, pulpit announcements, newsletters, parish websites, phone calls, etc. is vitally important to foster hospitality. Where people believe that they are informed, they experience that sense of belonging. Where communication is lacking within the parish, people feel disconnected. Often, this results in inaccurate and destructive conclusions drawn by certain members of the parish family, which when shared among parishioners, leads to confusion, hurt and anger.

Ministry Fairs: Ministry or Stewardship Fairs are great ways to invite parishioners to become involved. By having each parish organization set up an information booth for parishioners to see and learn about the various parish ministries, we open them to a world of possibilities in the parish where they can give of their time and talent. These fairs also provide members of each organization an opportunity *personally* to invite parishioners to become involved. Sign-up sheets at the booth allow contacts to be made efficiently. Stewardship Fairs held shortly prior to the annual parish stewardship renewal are very effective in welcoming and inviting parishioners, new and long-standing, to become personally involved as stewards in the life of the parish family.

Social Activities: The parish is a place of many social activities. Participating in these activities nurture our sense of community and belonging. At these events, greeting and talking with parishioners, especially new parishioners, is an important function of all members. If the leaders of the parish committee, which organizes the activity, make the welcoming of parishioners a priority as part of the event itself, this models hospitality for all those who attend.

Empowerment: Parishioners have a great sense of empowerment to want to serve the parish when hospitality is present. The pastor's personal invitation and empowerment of committee members to carry out the mission statement help foster a sense of hospitality. Identifying the gifts and talents of parishioners aids their sense of empowerment. Consider having creative programs where people notice a parishioner's talents and gifts, (anonymously or openly), and then invite that parishioner to use those gifts for the greater good of all.

Direct and Rapid Follow-Up: Once we have effectively invited parishioners and they have accepted or are open to our invitation, it is imperative that parish leaders follow-up with the invitations. If a parishioner has been inspired to sign up on the time and talent form for a particular parish ministry and we fail to follow-up personally with them in a reasonable period of time, the result will be disastrous. **Next to a lack of invitation, a lack of follow-up is one of the surest sources of poor parishioner involvement.** It is better not to invite parishioner involvement, than to invite and then do nothing when the parishioner offers his/her gift to the parish.

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA): Individuals desiring entrance into the Catholic Church through the Sacraments of Initiation often experience a close bond with each other and their sponsors during their catechumenate period. Sadly however, too often once these persons are initiated fully at the Easter Vigil into the Catholic Faith, they become lost in the large parish community. These new parishioners are the fertile soil, awaiting an invitation to become active stewards in the parish family. Special care should be given these persons both by their individual sponsors in the RCIA journey, as well as members of the welcoming committee of the parish.

Reflection Questions

1. Is your parish a welcoming and hospitable place of worship? How are new parishioners welcomed into your parish family? Do long-standing members of the parish feel welcome and involved?
2. Using the building blocks listed above, how can your parish extend hospitality and welcome to all who come to your parish? What other building blocks might make your parish more welcoming to parishioners?
3. Does the role of hospitality and welcome fall into each of the goals and objectives of the mission of the parish? Does each parish organization recognize its responsibility to practice hospitality and welcome?

Building a Stewardship Parish on Four Pillars:
Hospitality, **PRAYER**, Formation and Service



Prayer



A stewardship parish strives to nourish the soul through prayer. "Prayer is as necessary to our souls as food is to our bodies." (*Characteristics of a Christian Steward*). Prayer and the sacraments dispose a soul to receive God's abundant graces, which are necessary to grow in holiness. It is through prayer that we nurture our personal relationship with Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

While parishioners find great fulfillment in giving themselves to parish life, prayer purifies and intensifies the intention of the steward. Prayer increases our yearning to receive the source and summit of our Catholic faith, the Eucharist. As a parish family, we gather together to worship and praise God in the Mass. Nourished by the Word of God and the Eucharist, we are strengthened as a parish family to go and to serve the Lord. Stewardship is a lived response of the disciple to follow this command.

There is a deep connection between the Eucharistic celebration and stewardship. In one of the prefaces of the Eucharistic prayers it says, "*Lord, our desire to thank you is itself your gift.*" The Third Eucharistic Prayer states, "*All life, all holiness comes from you through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, by the working of the Holy Spirit... And so, Father, we bring you these gifts. We ask you to make them holy by the power of your Spirit, that they may become the body and blood of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at whose command we celebrate this Eucharist.*"

All we are and seek to become is strengthened and becomes more perfect through the Eucharist. It is in the Eucharist where we again recognize our total dependence upon God for everything. All that is good is a gift from Him. It is not that we have loved Him, but that He first has loved us by giving His Son.

In both our personal and communal prayer, we turn toward God to discern properly our talents and gifts. In a steward's response, we place those gifts at the service of God and one another. At the heart of the steward's prayer is the petition, "Thy Will be done."

Listed below are some of the "building blocks" a stewardship parish considers as it seeks to grow in prayer:

Pastor: The pastor is a man of prayer, who helps lead his parishioners to be a people of prayer. Spiritual exercises, which promote this prayer life, include: private prayer daily, communal prayer and participation in the sacramental life of the Church. Through his leadership, prayer is the rock foundation of every parish direction and decision. Parishioners see and more readily trust pastoral decisions as they witness the Holy Spirit guiding and directing the parish vision and planning.

Pastoral Planning: Prayer is essential to the spiritual life of the individual, the family, the parish and the Church Universal. Prayer needs to precede the development of the parish pastoral plan as well as precede every step of the implementation of the plan. The parish organizations model this for all parishioners by beginning the meeting or activity with prayer, calling each person into a conscious presence with our Almighty God. As a seminary professor once taught, "Do not become so involved in the work of the Lord, that you forget the Lord of the work!"

Holiness: Holiness is the perfection of love - to be like Jesus. To grow in holiness is the ultimate desire of our prayer life. This gift and call to holiness is first given to us at our Baptism when we become children of God. Our journey of faith in this life is a spiritual journey to the Lord. If we do not recognize the end to which God calls us, then we are not following the Way, Truth and Life, who is Christ Himself.

Sacraments: Frequent reception of the Sacraments, especially Reconciliation and Holy Communion, strengthen us in our journey to holiness. The sacraments are visible signs of God's love that make us grow in grace, in our participation in the life of our God.

Liturgy: The celebration of the Sunday Mass Liturgy is the source and summit of our lives as faithful stewards. The liturgical prayers throughout the Mass flow from the heart of stewardship. The Eucharist not only feeds us, but challenges us to share the gifts we have received with others. We are sent "...to love and serve the Lord" at the conclusion of the Mass. A constant challenge exists to help parishioners make the correlation between their call to discipleship as stewards and the liturgies we celebrate in our prayer.

Gratitude: A deep sense of gratitude fills the heart of a steward. The steward understands that everything they are and have that is good comes from God. The recognition of the gifts received daily from God makes us consciously aware of God's Presence among His People. Our desire to thank God is His gift. As disciples, we are called to respond by using these gifts of our time, talent and treasure. Gratitude in our hearts cultivates our prayer.

Conversion: Our journey towards holiness requires a lifetime of daily conversion. Prayer helps us see to see ourselves as God sees us and to see who God calls us to become. Without the desire for conversion to become faithful stewards, our spiritual blindness leads to selfishness and pride.

Virtues: Through faithful lives of prayer, we grow in virtue. Our prayer takes deep root when we practice the theological virtues, (faith, hope, and charity); the cardinal virtues, (prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude); and seek to live the fruits of the Holy Spirit, (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control). We grow in virtue when we pray. A steward is a person of virtue.

Reflection Questions

1. Is your parish a place of prayer? Is it evident to you that the directions and decisions of the parish are guided by a deep prayer life of the parish community?
2. What can your parish do to help yourself and others make prayer a greater priority?
3. What ideas do you have to strengthen each building block listed above to lead parishioners within your parish to deeper prayer?

Building a Stewardship Parish on Four Pillars:
Hospitality, Prayer, **FORMATION** and Service



Formation



As the steward grows in the life of prayer, God reveals Himself more intimately in this personal relationship. The steward also sees that the gifts received from God are to be shared and not buried. The steward remains deeply rooted in humility, recognizing that the gifts one has been given come not from self, but from God. Those gifts are to be shared with others. Here lies the heart of the steward's personal response as a disciple – to share what one has received and to share with a generous, grateful and loving heart.

This formation of each individual becomes part of the formation of the parish community. As members of the Body of Christ, the parish recognizes that it has a call from God to give. Inherent within each individual is the need to give – to move from selfishness to selflessness. This formation is a life-long journey of conversion. The stewardship parish journeys constantly in this formation of conversion. As one grows more deeply in this formation to a life of stewardship, the more deeply one loves as God loves us. This is true for the individual steward and for the stewardship parish.

Such formation is a formidable task, involving education of the mind and conversion of the heart. To *know* the “stewardship way of life”, does not make one *live* a “stewardship way of life.” Formation includes quality education, but the knowledge itself is not enough. Ongoing Catholic education, (for children and adults), is important if we are to grow in our lives as stewards. This formation should include a proper knowledge and understanding of stewardship since it is a primary means to lead the faithful to holiness. Catholic schools, Parish Schools of Religion, youth ministry programs, adult education offerings and parish stewardship committees are wonderful and essential places where this faith formation begins. Yet, it is foolish to think that these are the only parish organizations responsible for this faith formation of parishioners to grow. Every parish organization has a role to play in nurturing the faith formation of the parishioners. It is in this collective parish effort and the grace of God at work through our sincere efforts that faith formation thrives. The meaning of faithful stewardship and how to live this way of life is at the core of the disciple's response to the gift of faith we freely receive from our loving God.

Listed below are some of the “building blocks” a stewardship parish considers as they form individual stewards within the parish:

Pastor: The pastor is the primary communicator of stewardship to the parish. He teaches by his personal witness the spirituality of stewardship: in the pulpit, in parish gatherings, ministry meetings and in each and every interaction with his parishioners. Often, a priest must journey through his own spiritual conversion to embrace stewardship completely. This personal conversion as well as his visible support for the message is needed to teach the stewardship way of life throughout the parish and wider community.

Stewardship Committee: The stewardship committee assists the pastor and Pastoral Council in facilitating the stewardship formation process throughout the parish. Members of the committee work closely with the pastor in executing a well-planned stewardship renewal process; seeking lay witnesses for presentations and to find inviting ways to provide stewardship opportunities to parishioners through other ministries. The Diocese of Wichita provides beneficial resources to parishes to facilitate a successful stewardship renewal.

Witness Talks: Lay witness talks often take place at Sunday Mass during the parish's annual stewardship renewal. These presentations often inspire parishioners to discern and pray more fervently about embracing a stewardship way of life. By parishioners sharing with the entire parish family their own personal conversion stories to the stewardship way of life, the message becomes real, inspiring and practical. These talks are effective tools to the wider parish congregation as well as to smaller groups or parish organizations.

Pastoral Planning: Stewardship formation should be included in pastoral planning efforts through specific objectives and goals. This inclusion allows an action plan to carry out these goals and objectives based upon the needs of each parish and the mission of the church.

Need Identification: The needs analysis process identifies the types of educational and formational programs which correspond to the unique demographics of each parish. The goal is to integrate practical, applicable, and vibrant educational programs with solid theological formation. Stewardship formation is tailored to the individual needs and opportunities present within each parish. The parish mission statement serves as the foundation of this formation effort.

Parish Ministries: All parish leaders best teach the stewardship way of life by their own living witness as stewards. One cannot teach well what one fails to live. Leaders should also be prepared to educate those in their respective organizations about the vision, mission, goals and objectives of the parish. The pastor assists in forming parish leaders to nourish and equip them in their ministries. This is accomplished through parish leadership training days and retreats as well as other on-going formation.

Catechesis: Catholic education programs such as Catholic schools, adult education, Parish School of Religion, youth ministry programs and retreats are vital components in the role of faith formation, including the formation of the stewardship way of life. Educating parishioners in the spirituality and beauty of stewardship forms them to become faithful disciples of Jesus to live their Baptismal call. Stewardship parishes begin teaching this way of life to their youngest members and continue this on-going formation through all stages of the lives of their parishioners.

Volunteers: Education, formation and appreciation of parish volunteers build and sustain the stewardship way of life. The pastor, pastoral council, stewardship committee and parish ministry leaders are key people in this effort, though this responsibility is not theirs alone. Volunteers need opportunities to carry out their discipleship. The myriad tasks that stem from the pastoral planning efforts create many opportunities for parish volunteers to carry out their call to discipleship. If limited opportunities are available, the importance of stewardship loses meaning.

Youth: Forming young stewards begins first in the home by families living a stewardship way of life. As children understand and live stewardship, so too do they grow individually on the journey toward holiness. Catholic schools, religious education programs, and youth ministry need to include stewardship education in their curriculums and objectives to foster lived stewardship among the youth. One cannot run before one learns to walk. One begins to walk at a young age by taking small steps. It is natural for a parish to ask parishioners to take a leap of faith to live stewardship when those parishioners have been continually formed as to the meaning of stewardship.

Evaluation: Continual evaluation of formation and education offerings in the parish helps to determine the effectiveness of such formation. Do the programs teach God's love and mercy and meet the needs of the parishioners? Do the parish programs support the spirituality of stewardship as a way of life to lead all on the path to holiness? Written evaluations by the participants in the programs and self-evaluations by those who prepare these offerings are beneficial tools to answer the above questions.

Reflection Questions

1. Reflect how the pillar of prayer relates to the pillar of formation. Does this connection manifest itself within your parish?
2. What ideas might you have to strengthen the building blocks listed above for deeper faith formation of your parishioners?
3. Do the mission, vision, objectives and goals of your parish include enough emphasis upon faith formation of parishioners? If not, in what area(s) in the parish does greater faith formation need to occur?

THE PILLARS OF PARISH STEWARDSHIP

Building a Stewardship Parish on Four Pillars:
Hospitality, Prayer, Formation and **SERVICE**



Service



Members of a stewardship parish are ready to minister to varied needs of their own parish family as well as the needs of the wider community and Church. Just as the members of a family come together to help one of their own, a stewardship parish family serves those who are hurting or in need, doubting or seeking salvation. The parish family also comes together to celebrate, thank and to return God's gifts—all are needs of parishioners.

Like a blood family, the parish family stands ready and eager collectively to wrap their arms around their brothers and sisters when they suffer in trial and/or celebrate special events in their lives. *“God so constructed the body, that there may be no dissension in the body, but that all the members may be concerned for one another. If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members share its joy.”*
(1 Cor. 12: 24b, 25-26)

Parishioners seek the parish family as a primary community to serve and to be served—to give and to receive. If a parishioner finds they can serve and be ministered to, they have little need to search elsewhere for this fulfillment. Likewise, they have recognized a place where their service is appreciated and utilized for the good of the Church.

But the members of a stewardship parish recognize that they also have a need to give beyond their own members only. They have a need to serve and to give in the diocese, the community and the Universal Church. Failure to have this understanding leads to a selfish parochialism, which is life draining to a parish stewardship way of life. This is a challenge to some parishioners, who are willing to serve their own, but not outsiders. Interestingly, if this is the mindset of a particular parish, chances also exist that such a parish does not embrace fully the first pillar of a stewardship parish – namely, hospitality.

The pillar of service is an opportunity for the parish to put into concrete practice the other three pillars mentioned earlier in this document: hospitality, prayer and formation. To say one is a stewardship parish is not enough to make one a stewardship parish. True stewardship parishes practice all four of these pillars, with Jesus Christ as the model and the foundation from which the pillars arise.

Listed below are some of the “building blocks” a parish might consider in their construction of service as one of the pillars of stewardship.

Pastor: The pastor serves best by making himself available to parishioners to meet spiritual needs. Being present with parishioners in times of illness, bereavement, loneliness and confusion leave lasting impressions. Sometimes a pastor's care in these matters will mean the most to those who are served. A stewardship parish seeks ways to help the pastor fulfill his mission of service, by reducing parish responsibilities that can be assumed by persons other than the pastor.

Pastoral Planning: Good pastoral plans provide opportunities for parishioners to serve in a manner meaningful to them and the parish mission. The identification of the unique needs of each parish is a prime component in good pastoral planning. One cannot resolve a need if it has not been identified. In addition to identification of needs, there may exist a necessity to prioritize those needs. Good pastoral strategic planning looks at the needs that can be met immediately and those that may have to be wait to a later date. Communication among parish organizations is helpful in the pastoral plan so that all are aware of the primary ways that each organization serves within and outside the parish family.

Stewardship Committee: The stewardship committee works hand-in-hand with the pastoral council to develop the pastoral plan listed above. Of special importance, this

committee helps to structure the manner in which the pastoral plan is implemented. The annual stewardship renewal and the ministry fairs described earlier in this document identify potential parishioners who have the gifts and interests to address new needs within the parish and the wider community.

Renewal: The stewardship renewal process is important individually and communally. As individuals renew their stewardship pledge, they commit themselves to God in sharing their time, talent and treasure. It may take some time before a person is ready to make such a commitment of stewardship. This is one reason why the annual renewal is important for the conversion to the stewardship way of life. Yet, the annual renewal is important for every steward no matter where the individual is in the conversion process. The renewal offers a time of discernment. The message of stewardship remains the same each year. But the parishioner receives the message in a different way every year. The change in the situation of life from year to year makes the steward ask, "God, where can I best place my gifts at this time in my life?" The placement of the gifts of time, talent and treasure changes throughout the course of life. This is why the renewal is an annual examination of how faithful one is to living stewardship as Christ has taught us: "I have come not to be served, but to serve."

Parish Ministries: The various ministries in a parish extend God's presence, love and mercy to others. Parish ministries should strive to meet the needs of the parish, and where possible, the needs of the wider community and the Church at large. These ministries provide opportunities for parishioners to carry out their call to discipleship. A well-developed parish pastoral plan will ensure this.

Youth: Our youth are the present and future generations of stewards. Giving youth opportunities to serve now is important for them as individuals, for the parish family and the community. If they learn the meaning of true stewardship at young ages and naturally mature in their understanding as they grow older, they will be very well prepared to teach their own children about stewardship as a disciple's response to God's love. Being patient and understanding with their development from childhood and adolescence as they grow into their adult vocation is important as they develop a sense of responsibility to their family, parish and community.

Volunteers: Providing meaningful opportunities for parishioners to serve and mature individually and as a family is necessary to foster a stewardship way of life. Helping parishioners identify their gifts, talents and treasure enables them to give of these gifts in meaningful, lasting ways. This conversion from, "What can I get?" to, "What can I give?" is a sure indicator that stewardship is taking root in the heart of the volunteer.

Evaluation: As mentioned earlier in this document, evaluation of the outreach and services the parish provides will assist in updating and forming parish ministries and the overall parish pastoral plan. The most successful stewardship parishes are constantly asking the question, "Are we seeking to meet the needs of our parishioners?" Once the needs are identified and ministries are established to address those needs, the people served will respond in generous and life-giving ways. For those more advanced in the conversion to stewardship as a way of life, one must remember that not all parishioners are at the same point in the conversion journey. When the needs of the parishioners are met, the parishioners begin to see the vibrancy of the parish life. This initiation is time consuming and at times, even frustrating. But it is proven as a way of effectively converting parishioners to become holy and faithful stewards. Part of the evaluation to build opportunities for service in the parish is to ask, "Do our parish programs support the spirituality of stewardship as a way of life to lead us along the path to holiness?"

Reflection Questions

1. What are some ways Jesus lives his teaching, “I have come not to be served, but to serve?”
2. In what ways in your life have you personally experienced joy and satisfaction in giving of self to another without condition or expecting repayment?
3. As a parishioner, what ideas might you have for establishing or strengthening the building blocks listed above to promote greater service in your parish?
4. How do the pillars of hospitality, prayer and formation manifest themselves through the service ministries offered in your parish? What pillars are strong? What pillars are weak?

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF WICHITA
424 North Broadway
Wichita, Kansas 67202
316-269-3900