

Growing Healthy Stewards - Covenant

Introduction

Stewardship education is an important aspect of healthy parish ministry. The generous giving of our time, talent and treasure ensures that parishes have the resources to be vibrant, attractional and missional. Our stewardship is a part of how we live out our discipleship – essentially our call to be fully-committed followers of Jesus Christ. As stewards we commit to a life of generosity in all aspects of our lives. But how do we do that? Or more importantly, where do we learn to do that?

Too often parish leadership is inclined to leave personal stewardship to chance, the hope being that congregants want to give, know what they are giving to and give at an appropriate level. Leaving stewardship to chance, however, is not a practical or reasonable approach to ensuring generous giving; (the likely outcome being that givers will consistently give the same amount of their time, talent and treasure and usually at less than optimum levels).

Growing Healthy Stewards is a stewardship education program that does not leave personal stewardship to chance. Amid a myriad of stewardship programs, Growing Healthy Stewards has three unique features: it is coached; its programs have been widely tried, tested and refined by parishes in the diocese of Toronto; and, the outcomes are measurable.

The benefit of a coached program

The most unique feature of this program – one that sets it apart from others – is that it is coached. Each parish that commits to the program is teamed with an experienced lay volunteer who has a proven track-record of stewardship leadership in their own parish.

Over the course of the year-round program, parish leadership can expect to meet with their coach at least quarterly to evaluate campaign progress, assess the various program modules and plan for subsequent engagements with the broader parish community. The coach will help motivate the leadership, keep them focused on the program outline and offer advice on how best to respond to the challenges that every parish encounters when introducing a year-round stewardship education program.

Tried and tested

Each program module has been tested in a parish environment. Whether the monthly focus is on pledging or voluntarism, legacy giving or joyful giving, outreach or education, every part of the plan has been developed, used, critiqued and refined by clergy and lay volunteers in Anglican parishes across the diocese of Toronto over the past ten years. Over one hundred parishes in our diocese have used some part of the program at some point with consistently positive outcomes.

As you study the various components of the program, you will notice that the stories and experiences of other parishes are woven throughout its narrative. All size typologies are reflected and from different parts of the diocese: St. Peter's Carleton Street in inner-city Toronto; St. John the Evangelist in Peterborough; St. John, Craighurst in rural Huronia and St. Clement, Eglinton – the list goes on.

Growing Healthy Stewards represents the bringing together of several stewardship modules into a focused year-round effort that will inspire church members to be more generous in their giving, incline them to become more familiar with their parish ministries and encourage them to become more committed to the life of the parish community.

Measurable and results oriented

Best practices are guidelines. They allow us to assess our successes and our shortcomings. In stewardship we use statistics from our Church Warden and Incumbent Returns each year to evaluate overall trends in the diocese and to forecast outcomes years into the future.

At the very foundation of the Growing Healthy Stewards program is an understanding that each parish has the capacity to grow healthy stewards. In order to do this we evaluate current stewardship experience within a parish against fourteen measurable best practices. These best practices are indicators of parish health – each essential to fruitful and lasting parish success.

These variables give a snapshot of financial, congregational, ministry and leadership health. The fourteen best practices include:

- Parish has an active stewardship committee
- Parish clergy committed to stewardship education
- Parish conducts an annual joyful/intentional giving campaign
- Through time and talent, full congregational participation is encouraged
- At least 4 sermons/year are presented on stewardship themes
- Development of an annual narrative budget
- Distribution of the proportionate giving work-sheet to all identifiable givers
- Individual annual giving to parish is at the optimal level of \$1,750
- Parish offertory equals at least 2.5% of gross family income
- 40% of identifiable givers use pre-authorized giving
- 70% of operating revenue comes from free-will offerings
- Parish directs 10% of revenue to outreach (with 5% to FaithWorks)
- Parish has a new-member ministry/orientation program
- Legacy giving is promoted in the parish

It should be noted that very few parishes score well in all categories at an initial evaluation. Yet when parishes commit the time and energy required to develop stewardship education in their congregation, many of these goals are attainable. Our objective is to move parishes from a baseline “C” grade to an “A” grade in three years or less.

Most parishes already achieve a high level of performance on some areas, through a dedicated year-round format and with the benefit of coaching; we endeavour to achieve a high level of performance in all areas.

What you can expect

This program is designed to grow members of your congregation into active disciples committed to generous stewardship of their time, talent and treasure. The year-round format ensures that members of the congregation are exposed to all aspects of stewardship education and that they are given the opportunity to fully embrace the life of the Christian steward. The program is intensive, requires dedication and should be followed as outlined to gain optimum benefit. To date, we have no evidence of a negative outcome being experienced when the program is used as instructed.

The components of the program are user-friendly, self-explanatory and organized according to the liturgical calendar. All templates, letters, forms, worksheets and brochures necessary to introduce the Growing Healthy Stewards program to your parish members are included in your resource

manual or on your jump-drive. You are encourage to use these and share the contents with members of your church congregation.

Over the course of the program year you can expect the following support from the Stewardship Office:

- 1) A dedicated and experienced stewardship coach who is familiar with the Growing Healthy Stewardship program will be assigned to your church
- 2) A program orientation meeting between parish leadership, your stewardship coach and the diocesan Director of Stewardship
- 3) An initial assessment of parish best practices
- 4) At least 4 quarterly meetings with your coach to evaluate program progress, plan activities and ask questions
- 5) Access to professionals in the diocesan stewardship office.

What we expect of you

In order for the Growing Healthy Stewards program to work it must be followed. As a participant in this new diocesan initiative we expect each parish to commit to following the program as it is laid out with minor variations (e.g. switching of dates on the calendar).

These are the things we expect from you:

- 1) Each member of the parish stewardship committee complete a personal stewardship audit and commit to a life of generous stewardship
- 2) All leaders are boosters of the program and lead by example
- 3) Clergy are proponents of the program and endeavour to speak often from the pulpit about discipleship and the importance of Christian stewardship
- 4) Meetings made with your Coach be planned and kept

We are committed to ensuring success in each of our parishes. Your commitment to the program will help ensure that success.