



STEWARDSHIP

Best Practices



Stewardship is still a relatively new term for most Catholics. Although the concept is relatively new, several parishes around the country have already developed outstanding year-round stewardship programs. As you begin planning your stewardship efforts, keep in mind that these parishes can be used as resources. The following list of best practices has been developed from materials collected by the Office of Stewardship and Development from various parishes within our own archdiocese as well as many others around the country.

- 1. Stewardship Commission:** Parishes that have an active and involved stewardship commission are more successful because the parishioners take an active role in planning and developing a stewardship program. They do more than focus on the renewal and commitment season; they help to plan a yearlong effort of communications and accountability.
- 2. Communications:** The message of stewardship should be communicated many times over the course of the year and used in many media sources. Parishes that have been successful in the past publish a regular parish newsletter, include updates in the bulletin on a regular basis, and communicate the message of stewardship in all their committees and ministries through prayer. Most communications should thank, inform and invite continued involvement.
- 3. Accountability:** Those parishes that focus their efforts on being accountable to their parishioners tend to have more successful stewardship programs. Showing the parish where their treasure gifts are used and how their time and talents are being managed can lead to a broader understanding of the message

of stewardship. One way to share this message is by using a parish stewardship accountability report.

- 4. Parish Leaders Guide:** Many parishes rely heavily on volunteer leadership. Many parishes struggle with finding and keeping quality parish leaders. One outstanding parish in another diocese has developed a parish leaders guide. They host a training session each year. At that session, they share the guide as well as the list of parishioners who have chosen to give their time and talent to the particular ministries of the parish.
- 5. Time and Talent Catalogs:** These catalogs are your chance to show off your ministries. Many parishioners say they didn't volunteer because they didn't know what was needed. Let this catalog list the ministries of your parish, highlight volunteers who have done an outstanding job, or list the various sacraments that are performed at the parish with a brief explanation.
- 6. Prayer:** Several parishes around the country open and close every meeting with a stewardship prayer. They change these prayers every month. At any point in time, every ministry and committee at the parish is praying together using the same prayer.
- 7. Walking Tour:** Create a walking tour of your church. You can spend some time to develop the history of the church. This can also serve as a stewardship accountability report to show where you have grown over the years as a parish due to the generosity of so many parishioners.
- 8. Phone Chain:** The most successful parishes have developed a communications tool that reaches every household in the parish. One parish in our archdiocese utilizes a phone follow-up technique that divides the parishioners among a core of volunteers, each of whom has a list of parishioners to



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Best Practices, cont'd

call on a regular basis. This was extremely beneficial when following up after the intention weekend. This parish has plans to extend the phone calls to invite every household to parish events.

9. Lay Witnesses: One of the most difficult tasks for anyone to do is to stand up in front of a group of peers and tell his or her story. While this is very difficult for most people, it can be very rewarding for the witnesses and the parish. Lay witnesses are very valuable to a parish. These witnesses can share the message of stewardship and how it changed their lives. They can speak of the importance of giving—that God asks us to take care of the earth, ourselves, and our Church. People are motivated by hearing that stewardship can work for others and they can relate to others just like themselves.

10. Archdiocesan Office of Stewardship and Development: Many strong stewardship parishes have not done it alone. They have worked together with the leadership of the archdiocese to create a plan that works for the parish. There is not one method that works for everyone. The archdiocesan stewardship office can be a great help to a parish as it begins planning the annual stewardship effort.

