

Beginning Stewardship in the Parish

The sacrifice of time, energy, and material resources that is necessary to fully integrate stewardship into parish life is minimal when viewed in the light of the return on this investment on people's lives. The parish will thrive and the enthusiasm becomes contagious.

In order for this to happen, it is imperative that the foundation be properly laid. Only when the basic steps are taken and a plan developed, can the stewardship efforts of any parish be successful. Failure to build the process on a solid base is guaranteed to bring failure or at best very short-term success.

The most common mistake parishes make in starting their stewardship efforts is in not gaining a consensus among the upper leadership that this is what needs to be done. It is strongly recommended that a series of meetings take place to accomplish this. These meetings should be guided by an individual appointed by the Archdiocesan Development Office and whenever possible be the same individual at every meeting.

First Meeting

Purpose: To determine if the parish is ready to commit to the stewardship process.
Attendees: Pastor
Parochial Vicar(s)
Parish Business Manager/Administrator
Pastoral Council Chairperson
Finance Council Chairperson

Second Meeting

Purpose: To gain consensus on the direction and to gain approval for the formation of a Stewardship Council.
Attendees: Pastor
Parochial Vicar(s)
Parish Business Manager/Administrator
All Pastoral Council Members
All Finance Council Members

Third Meeting (Stewardship Council Discernment)

Purpose: To discern people to serve on the Stewardship Council
Attendees: Facilitator
Invited individuals from the parish

Fourth Meeting

Purpose: To begin to inform and educate all ministry and organization leaders on the Stewardship process.
Attendees: Pastor
All Stewardship Council Members
At least one representative of EVERY ministry and/or organization active in the parish

This series of meetings will greatly facilitate the Stewardship Process in the parish. The Stewardship Council will then be able to continue the formation that has been initiated.

Next Steps

1. Determine next meeting date and time. This should be done within the next two weeks, if at all possible.
2. Select Officers – It is not necessary to over organize the Stewardship Council. It is best to have a Chairperson, A Vice Chairperson, and a Secretary. This enables the committee to have someone lead the meetings and someone to record what happens at the meetings. If the committee becomes too structured, it tends to take away from the spiritual focus of the group, which is vitally necessary.
3. Determine schedule of meetings for the next six months. Hopefully this can be on a set schedule, such as, the first Monday or the third Tuesday of the month. Initially the Council may want to have weekly or bi-weekly meetings to accelerate the learning process.
4. Study the U.S. Bishop's Pastoral Letter, *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*. If the committee members do not have a thorough grounding in the principles of stewardship, their efforts will not be effective. This can take several weeks or even months.
5. The Council members should each have a liaison responsibility for one or more ministries and organizations. This can be determined in any way that the group deems acceptable. The liaison method allows for better communication and action between groups and facilitates a common focus. This greatly helps to develop a synergy between all ministries and organizations in the parish.
6. Determine the committee's place in the parish organizational structure. It is very important that Parish Council, Finance Council, and the other ministries and organizations know what the Stewardship Council is, what it will do, and how it will work with and for them.
7. Discuss issues in the parish. In the discussion, it is important to try to focus on how the issues can be addressed with proper stewardship principles. The committee should utilize existing parish ministries and organizations for input and actions.
8. Decide on first year goals. It is very important that the committee does not take on too much, too soon. It is also important to review the performance of the goals. This should be done as each goal is happens, or doesn't happen. At the very least this should be done annually. Goals that are achieved should be analyzed to see why they were achieved, did they make a difference in the parish, what could have made them better, etc. Goals not achieved need to be reviewed as to why they failed, what could have been done so they would not have failed, were they realistic to begin with, etc.
9. Begin to plan for ways to spread the message of stewardship throughout the parish. This may include meetings with other ministries, bringing in guest speakers, planning celebrations of ministries, Ministry Fairs, etc. This is where you will have long-lasting impact on people and the entire parish.
10. Remember you are a Council, not a committee. Your primary role is to advise your Pastor, Pastoral Council, Finance Council, and ministries. Enlist the aid of volunteers for projects.