

## PREPARING TO BE GOOD GIVERS

Stewardship is how we spend our time, how we spend our financial resources or treasures and how we use our talents.

How do we use our time?

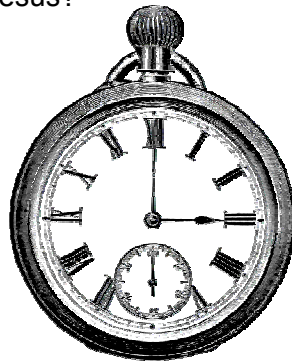
What talents do we have? Do we use them?

How do we use the money and treasure we have?

What is our relationship with God?

What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus?

How can we be people of prayer?



### ***A stewardship prayer***

*All generous God,  
you poured yourself out in creation;  
you gave your Son to die for us on the cross;  
and you continue to give yourself to us  
through the gift of your Holy Spirit.  
Give us generous hearts;  
that in our response to your love  
our lives may overflow in thanksgiving and generosity.  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.*

Stewardship is everything I do after I say  
'I believe'.

## Preparing to be good givers



As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him. And as he sat at dinner in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting with him and his disciples.

When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" But when he heard this, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners."

Matthew 9:9-13

## What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus?

Jesus did not create the institutional church that we have today in all of its shapes and forms. In fact, the very word "church" is not all that common in the New Testament. What we do find is use of the

phrase "*community of disciples*" (Acts 6:2) and we see that the word *disciples* is often used to speak of the community of believers. Writing after the resurrection, the evangelists were conscious of the links between the small group who followed Jesus throughout his mission and those who believed in him after he had risen from the tomb. What applied to the earlier group applied equally to the latter followers of Christ. The Twelve were not just models for later Bishops, they are models for all who are baptized.

### CHRIST AND THE DISCIPLE

A disciple in the New testament is one who has been



called in the same way that Jesus himself was called by the Father (John 5:19-20). As Jesus was called and sent and as he obeyed the Father, so all who call themselves disciples (who are baptized) are called and are sent and the task is the same: to live and proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God.

### FOLLOW ME

The mission of the Church begins in a very personal way, with the commitment of the individual believer, as well as the communities of faith, to live out, on a daily basis the commands and teachings of Jesus Christ. Each of us, in our own way, according to our own vocation and gifts, is called to live out, in a community of believers, the Gospel of our Lord. That is the starting point:

**We have to be living signs of what is possible in the Kingdom of God. If the world cannot see it and experience it in us, then they are unlikely to believe its message.**

## PRAYER

At its simplest, and I guess what all of us were taught in Sunday School, is talking to God. So from an early age we have learned that prayer is about words and we were often taught to pray in a set way.

But of course prayer is more than words and it is more than talking to God. The problem is most people, and even most good church-goers, never go beyond prayer as talking to God and asking Him for things. I suppose prayer is really the presence of God in our lives, it is that part of our life that is the direct result of God being part of our life. So prayer is a aspect of our life and one which is the deepest and most personal. Each one of us prays in our own way to our own God in the way that we understand God, so no one's prayer is ever the same as another's.

The secret to good prayer in all its forms is silence. Silence is something that is so elusive and is so often missing in our lives, not through our fault but through, in fact, the way we live and the society in which we live. Silence does many things. It enables us to enter into a deep communion with

God, not distracted by other people talking or by the noise of the world. Silence enables us, by using a church building with the familiar signs of our faith that we see week by week and day by day, to use a church so that we can enter into an exploration of God. The things of our faith that adorn a church help us to explore the intricacies of our faith and to explore the very depths of God who has revealed Himself to us in these many ways in history. Also the signs enable us by being apart, by entering the wilderness, to be away from the distraction of the world so that we can have our sights raised, be given a vision, rediscover the God who is so familiar as often to be taken for granted.

### **Prayer:**

*Heavenly Father,  
You have blessed us  
with so many gifts  
in Jesus Christ your Son,  
grant us your gracious Spirit  
that we may share  
These gifts with others  
and so become a blessing  
in your wounded world,  
for your love's sake.  
Amen.*