

Q. What do we mean when we talk about Stewardship?

Probably the word that comes to mind for a lot of people is “Fundraising.” We have a bad habit of equating Stewardship with Fundraising. Although Stewardship does help us to talk about money, it is in fact a core Spiritual Practice which applies not just to how we give our money, but to every choice we make about how we ‘spend’ our lives. Regardless of what faith tradition a person follows, the practice of Stewardship is essential to leading a thoughtful, blessed and faith-filled life. Let me outline the key principles of this core practice:

1. **Count your blessings** – People of faith are asked to take stock. Regularly. To notice. *What do I have? For what am I grateful?* This involves noticing things like time, energy, skills, passions, relationships, and yes, financial resources.
2. ***All Things Come of Thee and of Thine Own Have We Given Thee*** – this was the traditional prayer sung in my Anglican Church at the time that the offertory plates were brought forward in our Morning Prayer service. It was only later as an adult that I recognized how profound this statement is. Taken from *I Chronicles 29:14*, it expresses the second fundamental truth of the practice of Stewardship: everything that I have is a GIFT FROM GOD!
3. **Responsibility** – in the creation accounts found in the first chapters of Genesis, God creates human beings with a special responsibility in caring for the world God has made. This responsibility is a gift to human beings -- created in the image and likeness of God, created to walk closely and intimately with our Creator. We have been given the honour, the privilege, the joy, and the RESPONSIBILITY of making wise and thoughtful choices about the gifts God has entrusted to us. It is our responsibility to choose to use these gifts, not just for ourselves, but for the good of others, for the good of the world.
4. **Offering** – When I understand what I have, when I know that what I have belongs to God, and when I take up the mantle of responsibility that has been entrusted to me, then I choose how I am going to Offer. I choose how to offer my work, my skills, my talents, my interests, my time, and wrapped up in all of this, representative of all of this, I choose how to offer my money. In fact, the ways that I spend my time and money will paint a very vivid picture of what is important to me as a person.
5. **Receive** – Blessings tend to multiply. When you give – your time, your talent, your money – make sure that you notice what you receive in return. *Hint: You can expect to find out that you have more than you thought you did and that generosity feels GOOD!