

Stewardship 2014

Think of the word stewardship for a moment.

- What comes to mind?
- What does stewardship look like?
- What does it feel like?
- Now hang onto those thoughts for a few minutes

Where were you when Superstorm Sandy struck? How did people react? What did people do? What could they do? For Linda and I, this was the second time we experienced a near direct hit by such a storm.

I know a lot of people would like to forget the experience. When the lights went out, did you think – oh well, we'll have the lights back on in a couple of hours? But for many, the lights didn't come back on – for days and even longer. The word got out....

- The Great Hall at St. James' had its doors open to anyone who needed it
- It was warm here.
- There were connections to the outside world
- Lunch was being prepared. Hours stretched to days. More food kept turning up. People stayed longer because there was no where warm to go. Dinner was made.
- A few people, not St. James' parishioners, brought cash donations by – they heard what was happening here and felt a need to do something.

We have often heard the biblical view of stewardship: "Utilizing and managing all resources God provides for the glory of God and the betterment of His creation."

Sandy brought all facets of stewardship and the results of that stewardship to the surface.

- Time was given generously;
- Talents were on display in many ways – in the kitchen, helping with homework;
- Treasure was shared through the food brought in by many; donations that arrived at the door; the mere fact that St. James' had a door to open to whomever needed it.

To me, part of Paul's 2nd letter to the Corinthians, chapter 9 brings it all together:

⁶ He who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully.

⁷ Each must do as already determined, without sadness or compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

⁸ Moreover, God is able to make every grace abundant for you, so that in all things, always having all you need, you may have an abundance for every good work.

The long-standing stewardship by the people of St. James' was rewarded many times over in those 2 weeks following Sandy's arrival in dealing with the hardships.

I have been given the privilege of speaking today; the Sunday that marks the annual appeal for each of us to take stock of our personal orientation and commitment to stewardship. It is something that is very personal. I'd like to beg your indulgence for a few more minutes to reflect on how stewardship is part of our fabric.

Paul Bartkus mentioned in the last Journal that I chair the annual golf outing. I have spent a lot of my career managing projects – I guess it's a talent, but it's also a pleasure to share it. The time spent putting on the golf outing introduces a lot of people to what we do at St. James'; the whole committee and the volunteers give their time willingly.

I think about all the miles of wool knitted by the Yarn Twisters, the warm heads and necks of seamen traveling all over the world that have been touched by the hands at St. James'.

We have a hot family breakfast every month, music and singing at 10 AM, someone who answers the phone, writers and publishers of the Journal, the gardens are weeded and fertilized, the special sounds of the bell choir resonate, the Eucharist is brought to those who can't join us here in person, the sanctuary is always ready for the season and for the sacrifice of the Eucharist.

Did you notice that the candles are always lit for our services, and they stay the same size....the list goes on.

And what about everyone who participates in some way to the Backpack program? From picking up the groceries, filling the backpacks every other Sunday; and distributing to those who need it.

In fact, the list of ways our parish demonstrates its many avenues of stewardship lives in the St. James' Journal every month with articles about the good of St. James'. It's the time and talent of many that make it possible.

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When we think about sharing our treasure, one only has to look around to see what we have here and what it means. Our sanctuary, heated in the cold weather, fans turning in the hot weather. The Great Hall provides a place for our community to join together for many occasions and for many reasons. It is through the sharing of our treasure that what is here at St. James' is possible.

There are many ways to share your treasure; in the offertory basket, electronic giving, planned giving or through a will, a specially designated gift, the loose change in your pocket.

In my time on the Vestry, we often talked about how the people of St. James' always find a way to pitch in. We also talked about how often, all it took for someone to get involved, to give a bit of their time or talent, was to simply ask them. Did you read Betsy's invitation in the most recent Journal to participate directly at the Altar in some way?

Consider today as the tap on the shoulder to reflect on your talents, maybe there is a bit of your time – a void that needs to be filled, how you use the treasure that has been given to you; and answer the call to commit to stewardship in some way you have not done so before. Pledge cards, that other tap on the shoulder, will be mailed to you this week. Think about your blessings and consider how you can demonstrate Christ's call to stewardship.

We have a community at St. James' that constantly demonstrates the Christian meaning of stewardship in many ways.

I am going to borrow from Paul one more time in his letter to the Romans 12:7-9

⁷ If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well.

⁸ If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.

⁹ Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good.

<PAUSE>

A few (??) minutes ago, I asked you to think about the word stewardship. What came to mind? What did it look like? What does it feel like?

I hope that when the card from St. James' comes in the mail, you will feel the tap on your shoulder.

My thanks to David Lacouture and the Vestry for giving me the opportunity to share with you, and to you for being here.