



The Four D's of Stewardship

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In my various roles at St. James' over the years, I have come to appreciate the notion that stewardship is not destination but every evolving process. Stewardship encompasses a full range of activities, both individual and collective, over time. It can change and take different forms as we travel along our personal faith journeys.

While thinking about stewardship at St. James', I came up with so many examples of stewardship that I lost count. So I thought I would try to find a unifying concept that would best describe the stewardship process in a broader sense.

After a brief search I discovered "The Four D's of Stewardship" attributed to the Rev. Henry Wildeboer, a retired Christian Reformed priest. These four D's are as follows: Desire, Decision Discipline and Delight. I was unable to find an interpretation from Rev Wildeboer but they seemed quite fitting to Stewardship as I have come to understand it.

As we enter into the stewardship season, I offer here my own interpretation of the four D's of Stewardship in the context of my experiences at St. James'

Desire

One may not link the concept of desire with stewardship but it indeed makes sense. It's what I call the "seed" of stewardship. It's a powerful idea and emotional word that embodies both feeling and action. It's personal, compelling and motivating. It lifts us up. It can result for prayer or a personal experience that has touched us in some way.

Desire inspires us and urges us to take on responsibility and/or contribute to issues and causes bigger and more significant than our own interests.

Decision

With the inspiration to take our desire to a point of contributing and supporting action, we then ask ourselves, “How can I contribute?” “How do I engage?” “What are my talents and gifts?” “How much time do I have to give?” “How much of my resources can I share?”

We often led to prayer at this point and seek God’s guidance on how we direct our desire and make it both real and tangible. This step is the decision phase of stewardship. It is a personal and important step. It is exactly what we do during Stewardship season when we submit our pledge cards and proclaim we are prepared to joyfully commit our time, talent and treasure to God. It’s time now to make the decision to commit to Stewardship

Discipline

Without the discipline and follow through, desire and decision phase of Stewardship is worthless. Fortunately, there is plenty of stewardship discipline at St. James’. Our ability sustain an active Episcopal faith community on the corner of Washington and Moore Street for over 150 years is a testament to strong and on wavering tradition of stewardship discipline.

Consider the discipline of the founders of St James’ when, during the construction of the church in 1859, a summer storm destroyed the initial framing. Yet, equipped with their desire, decisions and incredible discipline, the church members started over again to complete the very same sanctuary structure we enjoy today.

Consider too the various capital campaigns over the years to expand and improve the infrastructure or the commitment of search committees to call new priests, or all the other lay ministries from Alter Guild, music, Vestry, fund raising, Sunday school, and the back pack program just to name a few.

We are here as the result of the stewardship discipline of hundreds of faithful St. James’ members who preceded us and we continue that stewardship discipline today and do so quite naturally.

Delight

Like desire, delight was not a word I would have previously associated with stewardship but upon further reflection it indeed makes sense. It is perhaps the most accurate word to describe a whole host of feelings such of satisfaction, pride, accomplishment and connection and love of God and to one another. It is the stewardship investment “dividend” that one really needs or expects but it sure bring joy to our lives.

My personal delight is felt every week when we are celebrate the Holy Eucharist in our sanctuary. This is a gift I never take for granted. I know from my experience on the Vestry that this seemingly simple ceremony takes many aspects of stewardship to make possible and to sustain.

Other sources of delight are baptisms, weddings and other special occasions. I would include funerals since it is so important to provide a place of worship for families who have experienced a loss.

Delight also comes from fellowship gathering, mutual faith and support during tough times not to mention our outreach ministries like the pack back program and giving tree.

So delight truly does have a place in the Stewardship process.

The Cycle Continues

This leads to the next phase of the process which actually takes us back to the beginning as we start the process anew with a new and renewed desire to contribute more than before. Whereas this seems like an academic study, we have all experienced this cycle to a certain degree in one form or another as members of St. James'. It's why we are all here and why will continue to be a part of the St. James' family.

Reflections on the Financial Life of the church

David Lacouture

I thought I would take a few moments to share my perspective of the finances at St James from my experience as a pledger, vestry person, Warden, finance committee member.

Not matter how its defined, Mission and Ministry required money to succeed and sustain. There is no doubt about it, it takes money to support our worship at St. James'. It really is quite obvious to all of us but sometimes it's honestly challenging for the Vestry to ensure we can maintain all the traditions we love.

I have said on many occasions how carefully the finances at St. James' are managed....and they have to be, there is little wiggle room. The Vestry and finance committee truly do an amazing job but funds can be tight in relation to what we expect.

As a Warden, one of my responsibilities was signing requisitions that approved the treasurer to write checks. Even though every requisition had supporting back-up documentation to justify the expense and I knew the expense was planned in the budget, sometimes the stack of the requisitions would be quite intimidating. The reality is simple, the bills need to be paid just like in our own households or else.....

With this in mind, the Stewardship Committee and Vestry is making a request that you consider increasing your 2017 pledge by 1%. Collectively, this small increase will help some of the challenges but not all. Of course you are welcome to increase your pledge by more if you can. Please give this request some thought and prayer as you consider your pledge.