

# Reclaiming Stewardship

Joe Merlino

October 16, 2019 | 2:00 p.m. ET

# Meet Your Presenter: Joe Merlino



- ECF Capital Campaign Consultant
- Episcopalian since 2009
- Home Parish: St. Michael and All Angels, Albuquerque , New Mexico
- Active in Parish Leadership: Congregational Development, Vestry Governance, Year Round Stewardship Planning
- MA in Practical Theology: Church Divinity School of the Pacific, Berkeley, CA
- Areas of Interest: Mission Integration, Stewardship, Building Relational Communities, Formation, Theological Reflection, Discernment

# Question



How do we move our understanding and practice of stewardship from transactional events to transformational experiences – from a focus on finances to one of the heart?

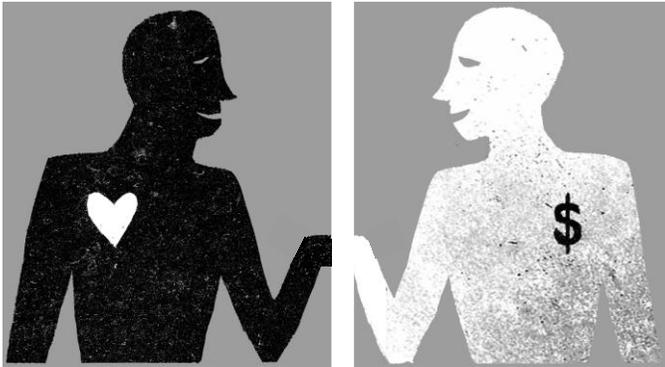


Mind or Heart

# Response



- We put them in conversation, in relationship.
- They are not diametrically opposed.
- Acknowledge that they are both practical realities of church life.
  - Brick and mortar facilities that employ staff require money to support mission and ministry.
  - As people of faith we have a responsibility to cultivate our own heart and to tend to the hearts and needs of others in ways that further our understanding and practice of faith.



Heart and Mind

# Response



- We achieve integrated hearts and minds when we engage one another with the intention of knowing one another more intimately - when we make deep connections that lead to an awareness about ourselves and each other.
- ◆ Deep connections allow us to understand and experience the practical meaning of faith in our lives, our experience of God, its influence in our relationships, and the ways in which our parish or faith community nurtures that understanding.



Integrating Heart and Mind

# Our Path



- Reframe a perceived financial obligation to joyful giving.
- Explore the definitions of transactional and transformational.
- Reflect on our own understanding and practice of stewardship.
- Revisit the theology of stewardship.
- Offer a new framework for stewardship that reflects that theology.
- Share practices that will allow you to develop and live into that understanding.



# Transactional and Transformational



## Functional



### ➤ Transactional Event

The exchange of something of value such as goods, services, ideas, or funds between two or more parties that rely more on the logical benefits of a transaction that meet a specific need, at a specific time, for a specific reason.

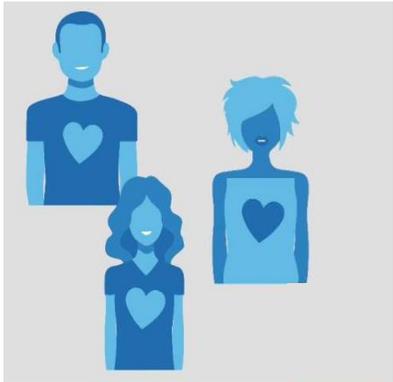
Conversations are functional, logical, cursory, and more on a surface level.

Transactional events have little impact on changes in thinking and behavior.

# Transactional and Transformational



Relational



## ➤ Transformational Experience

An exchange between two or more parties that evokes a meaningful experiential response that orients each party to a new way of thinking and entirely different way of being.

Conversations are relational, emotional, deeper and more substantive.

Transformational experiences imbue a basic change of character.

Mutually informative and beneficial.

# Reflecting on Stewardship



➤ What is in a word? Sometimes more than one knows!  
(The Rev. Richard Cunningham)

➤ It is through language that we describe the world... and when we describe it, we create distinctions that govern our actions. To put it another way, we do not describe the world we see, but we see the world we describe.

(Joseph Jaworski)



# Reflecting on Stewardship



Financial  
Stewardship

Annual Giving

- And so it is with stewardship!
- Stewardship is prevalent in religious vocabulary.
- Despite our familiarity many people of faith – including lay and clergy leaders - often equate stewardship with the “asking for, giving of, and receiving” of money.
- This is especially true of annual giving (i.e. annual stewardship campaign).

# Reflecting on Stewardship



Financial  
Stewardship

Annual Giving

Occasional Giving

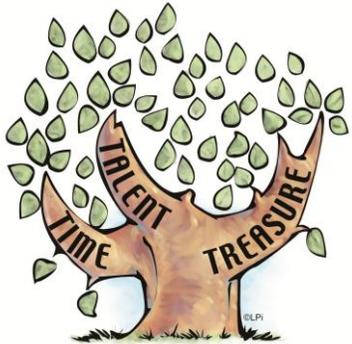
Major Gifts

Capital Campaign

Planned Giving

- And so it is with stewardship!
- Stewardship is prevalent in religious vocabulary.
- Despite our familiarity many people of faith – including lay and clergy leaders - often equate stewardship with the “asking for, giving of, and receiving” of money.
- This is especially true of annual giving (i.e. annual stewardship campaign).
- Take a test drive by asking the questions ...
  - What do you think of when you think of the word stewardship?
  - How do you practice stewardship?

# Reflecting on Stewardship



- There is another common interpretation.
- Time, Time and Treasure
  - Volunteer hours we generously contribute in support of church ministry.
  - Skills and talents that make ministries more impactful.
  - Financial resources that fund, sustain, and enable ministries to thrive.
- All three are critical to the vitality of parish life and the fulfillment of mission.
- Acknowledgement is critical to parishioner vitality, a sense of personal mission, and spiritual fulfillment.

# Stewardship Theology



- Our vocation to be stewards is at the very heart of the biblical revelation which acknowledges God as the gracious giver of all things. Our task as the Church is to become fully what God has already made us to be, namely givers like God. This is one of the most profound truths about ourselves.

(The Revs. Thomas Carson and Ronald Reed)



STEWARDSHIP

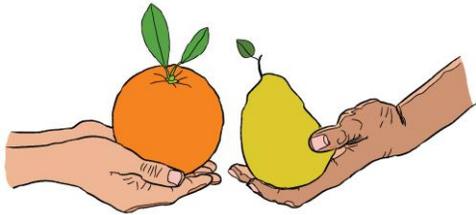
*At Disciple's Way of Life*

- ◆ Our call is to be in relationship ... expressed in the care of the soul of the other, in those living things with whom we share this planet, and the precious resources we have been given that sustain and inspire us.

# Stewardship of Personal Relationships



- For our purposes we will focus on our call to care for the souls of others – fellow parishioners.
- ◆ The great commandment is to love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves (Luke 10:27). If the central purpose of creation and redemption is person-making and personal relationships, then nothing is more important in Christian stewardship than what happens in our personal relationships. Persons are the richest resource of our lives.

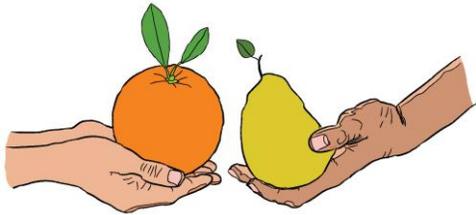


(The Rev. Richard Cunningham)

# Stewardship of Personal Relationships



Our responsibility is most intense in social groups in which we have sustained relationships, face-to-face contact, and common interests. These groups may take shape at work, in social life, in the neighborhood, and certainly in the church.



In these close relationships we learn how to open ourselves to others, to love and serve our neighbors, to forgive and be forgiven, to help and be helped.

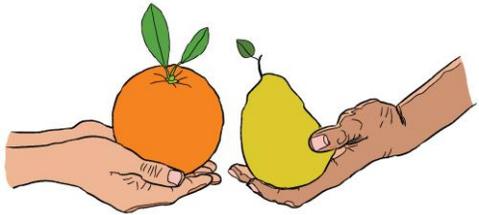
There is a mutual ministry within the church that facilitates the growth of people toward personal and spiritual maturity and that enables their ministry in the world.

(The Rev. Richard Cunningham)

# The Practice of Relational Stewardship



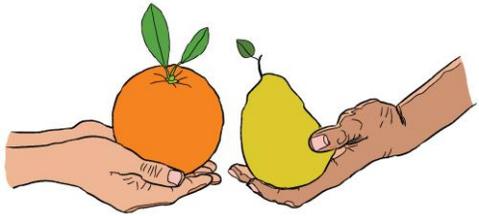
- ◆ It is in personal relationships that formation and transformational experiences occur.
- ◆ As experiences of living a life of faith become clearer, the meaning of faith and its impact in the individual lives of parishioners becomes more relevant, as does the appreciation for one's parish or religious institution, and the willingness to provide financial support.



# The Practice of Relational Stewardship



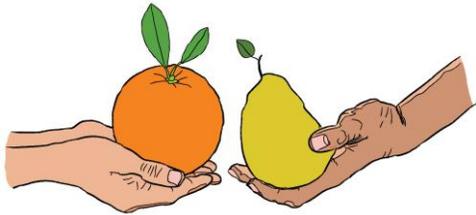
- ◆ It is in personal relationships that formation and transformational experiences occur.
- ◆ As experiences of living a life of faith become clearer, the meaning of faith and its impact in the individual lives of parishioners becomes more relevant, as does the appreciation for one's parish or religious institution, and the willingness to provide financial support.
- How do we practice this relational form of stewardship?



# The Practice of Relational Stewardship



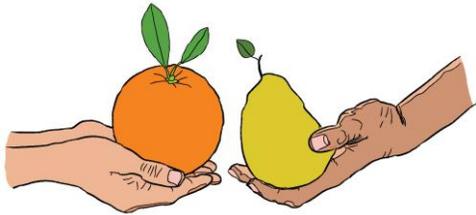
- We invite parishioners to be an active part of our annual giving process, outside of the act of making a pledge.
- We offer structured opportunities where parishioners can reflect on the practical meaning of faith and its impact in their lives – so they can come to a deeper understanding of their experience of faith.
- We do not make assumptions.
- We make it easy for parishioners to engage in the process.



# The Practice of Relational Stewardship



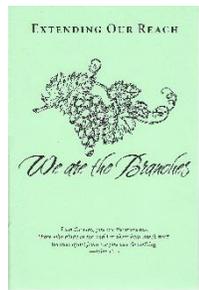
- We offer intentional questions that require deep reflection. <sup>1</sup>
  - How do you experience God in your life?
  - How does your experience of God influence your relationships?
  - In what ways does your parish nurture those experiences?
  - Given your experience of God how do you find hope in the world?



- We know responses may be cursory and so we invite people to go deeper.
  - Why is that important to you?
  - How does that make you feel?

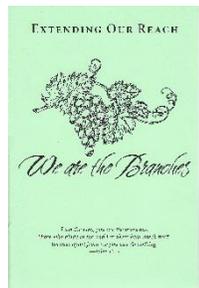
<sup>1</sup> St. Michael and All Angels Albuquerque NM 2019 annual giving campaign

# Implementation Overview



- We make reflection a part of Worship
  - Define a series of reflection questions, one for each week of the campaign
  - Allocate time for reflection during each service
  - Present one question per week for reflection
  - Provide a narrative description that may provide context
  - We may incorporate the reflection in that day's sermon
  - Create a campaign theme, logo
  - Incorporate liturgical arts as a visual representation of the campaign
  - Present written responses to reflections in the offering plate
  - Produce a parish video or incorporate other video resources as part of the process ... and so forth.

# Implementation Overview



- We have committee members available after Worship
  - Stewardship Q&A Table (Narthex, Vestibule)
  - Engage parishioners in conversations about their reflection
  - Distribute handouts about the reflection process
  - Distribute the rector's annual giving letter
  
- We incorporate weekly reflection questions in other areas of church life
  - Your Sunday formation hour
  - Godly play and youth formation
  - Weekday and Saturday services and formation events
  - Ministry committee meetings

# Focus on the Individual



- We make the approach person-centered.
- We focus on the experiential.
- We honor what is most important to members of our faith community based on the motivations that influence their thinking and behavior, because every person is unique.
- We promote reflection that moves from an awareness of self outward to a greater awareness of one's relationship with others.
- We know that this work is cross-generational.



# We Walk in Faith



- We trust that people are seeking a deeper relationship with God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit for a reason that is very personal to them.
- We trust that people are hungry for opportunities to reflect and grow spiritually.



- We trust that living into the paradoxical nature of faith will reward us with financial commitments that are commensurate with one's faith experience.
- We trust that the practice of relational stewardship will evoke shared experiences that create deep binding connections that impact congregational vitality, ministry development and renewal.

# Final Q&A



Additional questions and comments?



# In Closing



Living a spiritual life requires a change of heart. Whether we are asking for money or giving money we are drawn together by God, who is about to do a new thing through our collaboration. To be converted means to experience a deep shift in how we see and think and act.

(Henri J.M. Nouwen)



# In Closing



Thank you for time and contributions today!

GRATEFUL  
*thankful*  
BLESSED

# Additional Reading



- Year Round Stewardship Planning, Revs. Thomas Carson and Ronald Reed, 1986.
- Creative Stewardship, Rev. Richard Cunningham, 1979.
- A Spirituality of Fundraising, Henri J. M. Nouwen, 2010.
- Fashion Me a People: Curriculum in the Church, Maria Harris, 1989.
- Synchronicity: The Inner Path of Leadership, Joseph Jaworski, 2011
- Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory, Tod Bolsinger, 2019

# Contact Us



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