



Delight in the Giving

Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod Stewardship Newsletter
April 2016

Ventures for Growing Stewards workshops were offered in March 2016 in both Pocatello, ID and then in Boise, ID. When people were introducing themselves they were also asked to share what is important to them about stewardship in one or two words.

Here is what they said:

- ✝ Kristin Koskella Abundance
- ✝ Pastor Bob Stone Grateful heart
- ✝ Pastor Inger Hanson Authenticity and Justice
- ✝ Lorrie Lee Engaging faith
- ✝ Greg Fontaine Accountability and Responsibility
- ✝ Rich Novy Help others
- ✝ Tony Murphy Faith and Humility
- ✝ Steve Duff Commitment
- ✝ Nancy Duff Simple sharing
- ✝ Pastor Gina Herman Responsibility and Blessing
- ✝ Paul Malek Encouraging participation
- ✝ Pastor Helga Jansons Gratitude and Generosity
- ✝ Becky Newberry Consistency and Joy
- ✝ Tammee Busack Gifts
- ✝ Tim Fackleman Motivating
- ✝ Christy Lee Efficiency
- ✝ Mark Lee Caring
- ✝ Mike Roach Survival and Salvation
- ✝ Jerry Bouman Faith and Congregational Involvement
- ✝ Dr. Vincent Muli Kituku Using God's Resources
- ✝ Orville Schmidt Obedience
- ✝ Jetta Schmidt Caring and Loving others

A Letter About Patience and Working Together in Stewardship Leadership

To my friend and colleague – Poems penned by committee members, recent use of a story like “Bamboo” (copy attached), talking about stewardship of primarily of time and talents and eventually, when two small, rural, congregations...and their joint Stewardship-Mission Interpretation committee...were ready for it, stewardship of finances, all in context of holistic year ‘round stewardship...these have been my tools. My approach in stewardship leadership has been a gentle, gradual and patient one including a willingness to listen to my committee members of diverse backgrounds and experience...all of whom have become true stewardship treasures to me. A stewardship coaching emphasis on “generous listening” resonates with me when I think of my local stewardship committee colleagues of the last couple of years...they are receptive to coaching as you and I now understand it, but I’ve learned so very much from them along the way. This has included approaches to stewardship outside the conventional ones I learned in Ventures Leader training...and I would not have missed this particular journey in stewardship leadership for anything in the world. And we’re getting to the Ventures financial stewardship stuff...gradually, and at a pace that’s apparently proven comfortable for all. It’s all paying off too. As you’ve been reading, the Holy Trinity Lutheran Church-St. Paul Lutheran Church Joint Stewardship-MI Committee recently struck a chord with its homeless relief activities...the responses from the two congregations were/have been wonderful, and it’s had a share in spawning real congregant interest in other community service activities, and, wonderfully, in cooperation with other churches in the community. I’ve even heard that there were anonymous, or otherwise very quiet (Lutheran-like), financial contributions to the homeless relief activities. My gradualist approach hasn’t been arrived at in a vacuum, it’s also been based on on-going consultations with Pastor Phyllis and then Pastor Ann, who in their own rights have been very effective/appreciated stewardship advocates. It’s been based on real attempts to “read,” along with my committee members, our two congregations’ readiness for this or that teaching and/or leadership in year ‘round stewardship. Within the HTLC-SPLC congregations, the term “stewardship”...and we’ve also learned to refer to it as “caring”...is no longer a term that’s feared, or disparaged or simply associated with the annual budget drive. It has come to mean that year ‘round holistic component of discipleship, just as the joint committee hoped it might. And that’s come about with gentle leadership, constructive collaboration, patience, discussion, some unconventional detours perhaps, but again, the journey has been worth it. This is what has worked here. We’ve a ways to go yet, but we’ve come a long way too.



By the way, when recently asked by Pastor Ann to do a stewardship sermon/temple talk in her absence, I used “Bamboo,” along with a Luther Seminary stewardship resource on financial stewardship. The financial stewardship reading was indeed appreciated, but “Bamboo” really resonated with folks. The apparently eagerly-awaited temple talks following the homeless relief activities were also a wonderful opportunity to connect the congregations’ responses and contributions to what stewardship...year ‘round, holistic, part of discipleship....really is.

Thanks for the recent gentle nudge to set these thoughts to paper. Dick Dinkelmann (Ventures for Growing Stewards leader, living in Ephrata, WA)

Bamboo

Author: Chinese folk tale. Stewardship Resource
(Luther Seminary Center for Stewardship Leaders)

This story teaches us about sacrifice and service. The abundant life is the result of a willingness to be used by God in a manner not of one's own choosing.

Once upon a time, in the heart of a certain kingdom was a beautiful garden. Of all the dwellers in the garden, the most beautiful and beloved to the master of the garden was a noble, splendid Bamboo. Year after year, Bamboo grew yet more beautiful and gracious. He was conscious of his master's love, yet he was modest and in all things gentle.

Often when Wind came to revel in the garden, Bamboo would throw aside his dignity. He would dance and sway merrily, tossing and leaping and bowing in joyous abandon. He would lead the great dance of the garden that most delighted his master's heart.

One day the master himself drew near to look at this Bamboo with eyes of curious expectancy. And Bamboo, in a passion of love, bowed his head to the ground in joyful greeting. The master spoke: "Bamboo, I would use you."

Bamboo flung his head to the sky in utter delight. The day of days had been growing hour by hour, the day in which he would find his completion and destiny! His voice came low: "Master, I am ready, use me as you want."

"Bamboo," the master's voice was grave, "I would be obliged to take you and cut you down."

A trembling of great horror shook Bamboo. "Cut ... me ... down? Me -- whom you, master, have made the most beautiful in all your garden? Cut me down? Ah, not that, not that. Use me for your joy, oh master, but cut me not down."

"Beloved Bamboo," the master's voice grew graver still, "if I do not cut you down, I cannot use you." The garden grew still. Wind held her breath. Bamboo slowly bent his proud and glorious head. Then came a whisper. "Master, if you cannot use me unless you cut me down, then do your will and cut."

"Bamboo, beloved Bamboo, I would cut your leaves and branches from you also."

"Master, master, spare me. Cut me down and lay my beauty in the dust, but would you take from me my leaves and branches also?"

"Bamboo, alas! If I do not cut them away, I cannot use you."

The sun hid her face. A listening butterfly glided fearfully away. Bamboo shivered in terrible expectancy, whispering low. "Master, cut away."

"Bamboo. I would divide you in two and cut out your heart, for if I do not cut so, I cannot use you."

"Master, master, then cut and divide." So the master of the garden took Bamboo and cut him down and hacked off his branches and stripped his leaves and divided him in two and cut out his heart and, lifting him gently, carried him to where there was a spring of fresh, sparkling water in the midst of the master's dry fields. Then putting down one end of broken Bamboo into the spring and the other end into the water channel in his field, the master laid down gently his beloved Bamboo.

The spring sang welcome. The clear sparkling water raced joyously down the channel of Bamboo's torn body into the waiting fields. Then the rice was planted and the days went by. The shoots grew. The harvest came. In that day was Bamboo, once so glorious in his stately beauty, yet more glorious in his brokenness and humility. For in his beauty he was life abundant. But in his brokenness he became a channel of abundant life to his master's world.



Tracking Stewardship Data

Becky Newberry – King of Glory Boise

When I was first approached about assuming the duties of the church financial secretary, I had only a general idea of the responsibilities. I knew I liked being organized and keeping records and I already had computer and database skills from my career as an equipment engineer at Micron. With the help of the database software provided by the church (Revelations Church Management Software) I embarked on a journey that is now eight years in the making. But it wasn't until our vicar, Anne Palma, asked me to produce some anonymous giving statistics, that I added Microsoft Excel charts and started looking at the trends over a period of years. In the process, I found that adding the occasional bar graph was very visual and the information was welcomed by church council members and our Stewardship Committee. A graph can be a springboard for discussion surrounding stewardship. For example, if \$70K was received as 'unpledged' for the year, where might that amount been coming from – probably from faithful members who for their own reasons decided not to pledge - but possibly from a bequest or a single active member, or you might have another idea. From this information, the factors that may lead people NOT to pledge and how they might be engaged TO pledge can be considered. In addition to the graph below another graph breaks out how much people have pledged per week; \$1-10, \$11- 20, all the way to \$200 or more, and the total number of pledges each year for the past 3 years.

A graph can also educate the congregation and refute certain false hypotheses about giving trends and also motivate and invite members and friends of the congregation to 'step up' their level of giving.

