

Do You Have A Plan?

It is rare that we can accomplish something really special or great without a plan. No parish would even think of building a new church without a plan. Yet, we somehow think we can build a vibrant, new parish community without much of a plan at all.

If stewardship is going to take root and grow in our parish communities, we need to develop a plan and follow it. The twelve critical elements of a good and successful stewardship plan are:

1. Stewardship Committee Formation

Not only does every parish need a good stewardship committee to carry out the plan, but we also need to make sure committee members are continually being formed into good leaders through stewardship training, reflection and research.

2. Leadership Involvement

All Parish Council members, parish staff, and organization leaders must understand and support the parish stewardship plan.

3. Promotion of a Vision

Stewardship is most successful when the committee is working to fulfill a vision for the future of the parish, that all members of the parish community were involved in determining.

4. Accountability

We must be accountable to our parishioners for how the gifts they have already given have made a difference before we can ask them to give more.

5. Welcoming

If we do not warmly welcome every parishioner, we cannot expect those who feel unwelcomed to commit to any stewardship effort.

6. Lay Witness Presentations

Research continues to show that parishioners are most inspired to embrace a life of stewardship when they hear fellow parishioners share the witness of their own stewardship journey.

7. Commitment to Prayer

A good steward must know and follow God's plan. Yet, we cannot know God's plan for our lives if we are not in communication with God through regular Mass attendance, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, Eucharistic adoration, spiritual reading and prayer.

8. Commitment to Participation

We must invite people to participate more fully in the work of our parish by introducing them to our many ministries and asking them to sign up for at least one of those ministries.

9. Commitment to Generosity

Our Lord taught us, *"Ask and you shall receive."* - Luke 11:9 If we are not willing to ask our parishioners to commit to generous giving in our parishes, chances are they will give more generously to another organization or cause that is not afraid to ask.

10. Appreciation

Quite simply, no one wants to give us more, if we have not done a good job of thanking them for what they have already given.

11. Communications

Today parishioners hear an endless barrage of messages telling them they need to acquire more stuff. If they are going to resist these temptations, they need to hear messages from their parish reaffirming the importance and value of their giving rather than their "acquiring."

12. Parish-Wide Education

A good stewardship plan should involve educational outreach to all members of the community, including children in the day school and/or PSR, RCIA candidates, couples in marriage prep programs, and families in sacramental preparation programs.