

LIVING GENEROUSLY

a stewardship narrative series presented by TENS

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I suspect that when people think about stewardship most think about their pledge. There is nothing wrong with that as churches certainly need money to survive and flourish – generally more than they have. But that isn't the end of it because stewardship encompasses so much more. Being a steward requires that we carefully and responsibly manage or care for something that has been placed in our care.

That could certainly be the finances. After all, the rector and staff must be paid. There are also a few other expenses, such as the gas, electricity, water, garbage collection, phones, office supplies, flowers, wine, wafers, linens, perhaps a mortgage, and — as everyone who has ever been on a vestry knows — a thousand and one maintenance projects. These must be carefully managed. But paying the bills and keeping the campus in repair constitute only limited aspects of stewardship. As members of a congregation we are all responsible for these things through the donation of our Time, Talent, and Treasure – the three “T’s” we hear so much about. Our buildings and grounds are important as places from which to reach out and do our real work. The Church is the people both inside — and outside — the walls.



reflection questions

- What is something you can do well?
- How can that be used to help the Church, either inside or outside the walls?

So we have to ask, What else has been placed in our care? How about the other members of our respective congregations? Most certainly we must support each other if our congregations are to function. Our fellow parishioners are certainly to be counted among our neighbors whom we are to love as ourselves. What about our families? Is there any question there?

Of what else are we stewards? We are stewards also for the poor, the hungry, the homeless, the sick, and anyone else in need — these, too, are our neighbors whom we are called to love. This is a stewardship obligation clearly set forth in the Gospels. We are called to feed the hungry, tend the sick, clothe the naked and welcome the stranger. These, too, are part of the Church.

When we are charged — by society or by God — to care for someone or something, we are stewards. How do we fulfill our obligations? We can certainly give of our income. Perhaps you can mend vestments? How are your carpentry skills? Can you collect clothes and food for the homeless? Can you knit a scarf or hat for someone who has none? How about lending a sympathetic ear to a troubled friend?

It is in giving of ourselves for others that we, as Christians, should find our greatest joy, and there are countless ways to be joyful.



The Rev. Carolyn Woodall was ordained a Deacon in the Diocese of San Joaquin in 2012 after spending 28 years as an attorney. She is a member of the board of directors of Integrity USA, the board of trustees of The School for Deacons in Berkeley, from which she graduated in 2011, and the board of Sierra HOPE, which provides services to those with HIV/AIDS and other chronic illnesses. Carolyn lives in Copperopolis, Calif., with one of her two adult children, as well as four cats who deign to let her live with them.