

Standing Commission on Stewardship and Development

Membership

The Rev. Grant Wiseman, <i>Chair</i>	Upper South Carolina, IV	2015
The Rev. Benjamin E.K. Speare-Hardy II, <i>Vice-Chair</i>	Southern Ohio, V	2012
Ms. Charlene DeWitt, <i>Secretary</i>	Kansas, VII	2012
The Rt. Rev. Mark M. Beckwith	Newark, II	2012
Ms. Jeannette Huey	Missouri, V	2015
The Rev. Dr. Franco Kwan	California, VIII	2012
Mr. James R. McMahon	Pittsburgh, III	2015
Mr. Gregory Movesian	Colorado, VI	2015
Ms. Olivia V. Osei-Sarfo	Southern Virginia, III	2015
The Rt. Rev. Lawrence Provenzano	Long Island, II	2015
The Rt. Rev. Gregory H. Rickel	Olympia, VIII	2015
Ms. Sandra Swan	East Carolina, IV	2012
The Rev. Canon Timothy L. Anderson, <i>EC Liaison</i>	Nebraska, VI	
The Rev. Laurel Johnston, <i>Staff</i>		

Summary of Work

Meetings

During this triennium, the Commission met three times: November 17–20, 2009 in Chicago, Illinois, June 10–12, 2010 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and July 6–8, 2011 in Chicago, Illinois.

Charge

The Standing Commission on Stewardship and Development’s mandate is “to hold up before the Church the responsibility of faithful stewardship of time, talent and treasure in grateful thanksgiving for God’s gifts. It shall recommend strategies for stewardship education throughout the Church with special sensitivity to the cultural and linguistic diversity of our Church. It shall recommend programs for long-range planning and development, ensuring that other Church bodies, including the Executive Council, are part of the process. It shall assure that there is an official, periodic gathering, interpretation, evaluation and reporting of stewardship from throughout the Church. It shall help coordinate all Church-wide fund-raising activities.” [Canon I.1.2(n)(9)]

The Commission recognized the important work done in the past including: the creation of the Alleluia Fund, the resolution of Holy Habits, the recommendation to establish the Office of Mission Funding, a call for personal finance and debt reduction formation, sacramental stewardship formation, and options for online giving. Carried out in part by this Commission, the Office of Stewardship of the Episcopal Church, and The Episcopal Network for Stewardship (TENS), all of these efforts helped to support stewardship leaders and offered opportunities to increase the ministry of stewardship at the congregational, diocesan, and wider church levels.

The Commission gathered for its first meeting in Chicago in November 2009, almost a year after the unleashing of one of the worst economic crises since the Great Depression. Survival anxiety hit new heights with a loss of funding across the Church. In response, congregations and dioceses had to engage in difficult cost-cutting decisions and had to adapt to carrying out their missions with fewer resources. As part of this adaptive process, many congregations initiated ministries to the unemployed and began personal finance ministries, helping people to get out of or stay out debt. This unprecedented and difficult time called for a renewed commitment from lay and ordained leaders to address the practical, pastoral, and theological issues of faithfulness and the stewardship of resources.

Expectations (Core Competencies) for Steward Leaders

The Commission pondered the question: “How are we equipping our leaders to help others faithfully explore stewardship and generosity?” To help answer that question, the Commission initiated discussions with key leaders who were addressing the challenges of leadership formation and stewardship.

In its first meeting in Chicago of November 2009, the Commission invited Ed Kruse, Director of Stewardship of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), to review the process by which the ELCA created a series of core competencies for each of their graduating seminarians. Bishops, seminary deans, and synod leaders had input into the development of these core competencies, which were later adopted for all the baptized.

To further discern the way the Church is equipping steward leaders and best path to do this, the Commission invited key stewardship stakeholders working within The Episcopal Church in the ministry of stewardship to its second face-to-face meeting in Minneapolis in June 2010. Invited guests included: Mr. Donald Romanik, President of the Episcopal Church Foundation, Mr. Tom Gossen, Executive Director of TENS, Ms. Cynthia Cannon, Executive Director of the Consortium of Endowed Episcopal Parishes (CEEP), the Rev. Susan McCone, Director of the Office of Mission Funding, and the Rev. Laurel Johnston, Program Officer for Stewardship and staff liaison to the Commission.

Each of the guests gave a presentation on their organization’s history, mission, objectives, challenges, opportunities, and its current development of stewardship resources. This provided an invaluable learning opportunity of how stewardship is being addressed among stakeholders, initiated conversations about areas of future collaboration, and offered insight into the leadership challenges regarding stewardship.

In an effort to identify expectations of a well-formed steward leader who will have the capacity to shape the ministry of stewardship in his or her congregation or diocese in a healthy and positive way, the Commission created the following resolution to address the question: What expectations does the Church today need to have of a steward leader, either lay or ordained?

Resolution A088 Set Expectations for Steward Leaders

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring, That the 77th General Convention adopt the following expectations for steward leaders in The Episcopal Church:

Proposed Expectations for Steward Leaders in the Episcopal Church

Trusting in God’s Abundance, we will...

Proclaim a Theology of Abundance and Spirituality of Money

- Articulate and share clearly a personal stewardship story as it relates to money, resources, and relationships, and model this practice in community as an example to others;
- Foster a climate that invites others to explore the freedom to be faithful with their money, resources, and relationships;
- Articulate an eternal understanding of financial stewardship to include annual giving, major giving and planned giving;
- Live publicly the holy habits of tithing, daily personal prayer and study, Sabbath time, and weekly corporate worship; and
- Practice the basic principles of personal and corporate financial management leading to a healthy relationship with money as integral to our faith in God.

Teach Biblical and Theological Principles of Stewardship

- Listen to and interpret scripture and tradition with an ear for stewardship themes;

- Speak and preach prophetically, boldly, and regularly about stewardship;
- Engage in individual and corporate study of scripture related the theology of stewardship;
- Raise awareness of the history of stewardship in the life of local congregations and the wider church, including the faithful gifts of those who have gone before; and
- Build up and empower others in these expectations of steward leaders.

Engage and Critique Culture

- Have an informed theological position about social, ecological and economic justice;
- Speak to the vision of a divine economy (oikonomia) and the ways it is in tension with our global economy;
- Articulate the tension between the current consumer culture and following Christ; and
- Gather and empower groups of people to inspire action around common missions and goals.

Embrace the Interconnected Relationships between all Persons and Creation

- Understand our central call to steward the well-being of the entire created order;
- Speak to the impact of our lifestyles on all of God's Creation;
- Discern and enable the unique gifts of people to build up the Kingdom of God; and
- Utilize diverse approaches to stewardship based on generational and cultural differences.

Explanation

The Standing Commission on Stewardship and Development proposes this resolution designed to begin a conversation on what might be the expectations for lay and ordained persons in the area of stewardship. They can serve as a model for steward leaders as they look for ways to improve their skills and as a set of goals to work towards. It starts with biblical principles which reveal, in the New Covenant, a changed perspective of what stewardship is. Jesus, while supporting the act and practice of the tithe as a rule of life on earth, took the faithful life of a steward much further. Jesus did not ask for 10 percent, but instead 100 percent—everything. In His vision stewardship is seen as all that we are, all that we have, all of the time. In our tradition, in the sacrament of baptism, we are sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked as Christ's own forever. This is a total and unequivocal laying down of ourselves, our souls, and bodies, as living sacrifices. Through baptism, we enter into the household of God. The word steward comes from the Greek word "oikonomia," which means manager, caretaker or steward of that household. These expectations were developed with a deep understanding that our call to be stewards goes significantly beyond the reality of money. However, we also recognize that this power can become easily obscured by our many machinations undertaken to "soften" the difficulty of this topic in, and on, our lives. The power of money is pervasive in our living, and the Church is in no way immune. We believe, however, the Church should be the "household" that forthrightly meets the challenge with which this power presents us. So much depends on our getting right with this power, not the least of which is the justice envisioned by our Savior for this world and the world beyond. So we propose these expectations with a balance that incorporates a more holistic approach to stewardship, including our time, our relationships, our human gifts, and God's creation we have been given to cherish and protect, while not obscuring our very real need to confront the power of money. We propose these expectations with a deep thankfulness for all the stewards who have gone before us in this work, and knowing completely the reality that the life of a steward is the very way of life for any follower of Christ.

Commitment to Holy Habits as Renewal of Baptismal Vows

Commission members recognized that articulating the expectations of a well formed steward leader could be helpful in identifying the challenges and opportunities of leadership in a 21st-century church. To that end, the Commission also recognizes that is the commitment of daily practice, disciplines and habits that invite the ministry of the baptized into a deeper walk with Christ.

In an effort to re-enforce that stewardship of faith is a year-round process, not just a “seasonal ask” during the annual giving or pledge campaign, the Commission puts forth a resolution committing parishes and diocese to make a liturgical act related to the holy habits during the Great 50 days of Easter.

Resolution A089 Holy Habits and Renewal of Baptismal Vows

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring, That the 77th General Convention encourage that in the great fifty days of Easter the people of The Episcopal Church make a commitment to practice the holy habits of weekly worship, prayer, scripture study, tithing, and honoring the Sabbath as part of the renewal of baptismal vows; and be it further

Resolved, That the Office of Stewardship, The Episcopal Network for Stewardship, and the Standing Commission on Music and Liturgy develop a readily available liturgical resource that prayerfully invites Episcopalians to embrace the practice of holy habits to nourish and strengthen their vows in living out their baptismal covenant.

Explanation

The early Christian community understood baptism to be about human transformation. The person receiving the sacrament of baptism was to emerge from the baptismal waters a new person in Christ with a new set of values, priorities and commitments.

Each time we renew our baptismal vows in community, we profess that we share in the death and resurrection of Christ. Dying to self is the process of conversion that allows us to mature into the full stature of Christ. St. Paul, the first great theologian of baptism, expressed its meaning in terms of a break with the old and beginning of new life in Christ. He understood well the reality of being sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked as Christ own as a summons to a lifelong covenantal relationship with God in Christ. Baptism is the radical sign of the new framework for human life. It is the sacrament that underlies the meaning of Christian practice.

The renewal of baptism vows calls us back to our true identities--son and daughters in God’s household. God’s household is marked by the vision of Shalom, the biblical understanding of peace, justice, health, wholeness, harmony, the condition that allows all living things to reach their potential of wholeness. The word steward comes from the Greek word *oikonomia*, which means manager or caretaker of the household. As members of God’s household, we are called to steward God’s vision of shalom. Our baptismal promises show us a way forward in building up God’s household.

During the great fifty days of Easter, we are called to celebrate our life with Christ and to recommit ourselves to the beliefs and practices of our Baptism. In the renewal of our baptismal vows, we invite members throughout the Episcopal Church to commit to the holy habits of tithing, daily personal prayer, scripture study, Sabbath and regular corporate worship—practices that strengthen nourish, and reflect baptismal living. Holy Habits was introduced at the 2003 General Convention and approved in resolution A135 which called all members of the Episcopal Church to be encouraged to develop a personal spiritual discipline that includes, at a minimum, the Holy Habits of tithing, daily personal prayer and study, Sabbath time, and regular corporate worship. (See further explanation of Holy Habits below).

The Commission asks that those engaged in stewardship formation of the church such as The Office of Stewardship, The Episcopal Network for Stewardship and the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music create a readily available liturgical resource to the Renewal of Vows that includes a commitment to practice the Holy Habits

Baptismal living is a communal and worshipful endeavor. The creation of an intentional prayerful pledge commitment to practice holy habits during the season in which we re-commit to the promises made in our baptism will replenish and saturate God’s adopted sons and daughters with a vibrant and vital faith to continue in building up God’s household.

Addendum

2003 Report to the 74th General Convention
Explanation Holy Habits

We understand God’s invitation to be faithful stewards as a call to a lifelong journey of repentance, conversion, and renewed life. God calls us to grow into the *imago Dei* that we are created to be. Often, faithful response will require us to make choices which challenge our culture’s obsessions with scarcity, self-sufficiency, and acquisitiveness.

We are called to be stewards of our faith, of Creation, of civil society, and of our lives. None of this comes naturally, it requires both faith and commitment and so, and the church has developed a number of practices and disciplines or holy habits to help us on our journey. All of these find expression in our baptismal vows.

At the center of our individual and corporate lives is the call to be stewards of the Gospel. We are called not just to live our faith in Jesus Christ, but also to proclaim that faith by word and example. This finds expression in the way we work, pray, and give.

Standing Commission on Stewardship and Development

We are entrusted with the stewardship of creation. This means we must reflect on our use of resources and on what it means to have been given the care of the whole world and charged to rule and serve all God's creatures. The Baptismal promise to strive for justice and peace impels us to be actively involved as citizens of our communities, nation, and world.

To live as Christian stewards is to be intentional in our use of all that God has given us. Certainly that includes the first fruits tithing of our material wealth as a reminder and symbol of our thankful acknowledgement of God as the gracious source of all and as a way to begin dealing with our addiction to money. It also includes the discernment, cultivation and use of our skills and abilities to further God's work in the world, the mission Dei. Because our gifts differ, and because we sometime find it difficult to recognize and develop our own God-given giftedness, our baptism grafts us into the body of Christ. We are to recognize the imago Dei within ourselves and within every human being.

One of the great stewardship challenges of our age is our stewardship of time. We live in a culture that offers nearly infinite diversions and demands that we fill every moment with activity. There is no greater need, and nothing more counter-cultural, than for us to reclaim Sabbath time. Not only is the commandment for Sabbath time the second-longest of the ten; Sabbath is part of the order of Creation it is the very culmination of Creation. As the Church and as dioceses, parishes, and individuals it is imperative that we find ways to teach the absolute necessity of Sabbath as part of individual spiritual life and that we encourage and enable our bishops and clergy to model the balance of activity and Sabbath.

The Earth Charter and Environmental Stewardship

Mike Schut, Program Officer for Economic and Environmental Stewardship, joined the Commission at its meeting in Chicago in July 2011. Mr. Schut offered an overview of the history of the Earth Charter and pointed to examples of how dioceses and congregations have embraced and carried out specific parts of this broad-reaching document. He called for the Commission to respond to it with action steps. It is the mind of the Commission that those action steps are contained in the resolution submitted regarding the expectations of a steward leader.

Budget Report

The Commission spent \$10,648.98 in 2010 and \$10,896.34 in 2011 on meeting expenses. The balance remaining this triennium is \$14,454.68 (as of 12/2011).

Conclusion

As the work of the Commission continues into the next triennium, it will continue to recommend strategy for Stewardship education, and further develop opportunities for enabling and equipping steward leaders in the Church. The Commission intends to work to develop more resources related to the "Expectations of a Steward Leader" through work with Bishops, Diocesan Stewardship Officers, Seminaries, and other Stewardship leaders, and intends to continue to develop opportunities to educate and grow conversation around stewardship and development in The Episcopal Church.