

DIOCESE OF FALSE BAY



STEWARDSHIP PROGRAMME

2023

Bishop Margaret Vertue

Season of Stewardship 2023

Molweni family and friends of False Bay Diocese

Our prayer is that the selections offered in this handbook will be a rich source of usable material during the Season of Stewardship.

In Psalm 24:1 we read “The earth is the Lord and the fullness thereof”.

The Psalmist teaches us that God can be found in everything. He goes on to say, **“the world and those who live in it”**.

During the Season of Stewardship, we are clearly reminded that God is the disposer of property. The dignity of service is granted to us, the servants of God. As servants of God, we are also co-workers in taking care of creation, gifts and talents to bring honour and glory to God.

We have come through three years of the darkness of the Covid-19 pandemic. Many lost their lives, others their livelihoods. While we were still groaning, we had to face a new crisis. The crisis of loadshedding with the knock-on-effect of price hikes, further crippling an already fragile economy of the country, and our beloved Diocese. It is crucial that we turn to the person of Christ, who points us away from ourselves to the great “I am” sayings. He unrolls and hands down to us the scroll of the Old Testament and invites us to read the passage of Isaiah 61:11-12.

During the Season of Stewardship, Jesus is calling us to himself. It is more than an invitation; it is a command **“Come to me”** and **“Follow me”**.

The Season of Stewardship is a time of renewal, a time of dedicated giving and sharing.

My prayer and that of those who have written this book, is that God will use it in an effective way in the lives and ministries of many.

I am, Because you Are, Because God is... Embracing a world shattered by the Covid 19 Pandemic.

Prayers and Blessings

Bishop Margaret B. Vertue

Introduction

During the following weeks we will be reflecting on the various aspects of stewardship, and we thank our colleagues for their rich contributions.

Stewardship comes from the Greek word “oikos,” which means “household” or “estate.” The word “okimonos” (Greek) refer to “household manager.” The way most churches talk about stewardship today is a combination of the definitions described above. These include government and other official managers of money, or treasurers (Romans 16:23). It refers to administrators responsible for their employer’s possessions or affairs (Luke 16:1). “Stewards” also define Christians tasked with spreading the message of God (1 Corinthians 4:1).

Understanding stewardship could also be the responsibility of doing what God wants you to do with the resources you have received. In understanding stewardship, we need to begin with God, and acknowledge that stewardship is embedded within the relationship of God and humans. In this way, we are co-workers with God caring and being responsible for all the resources of the earth. In (John 1:3), the writer refers “all things were created through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.” Both these texts, leads us to the understanding that stewardship is a theological belief that humans are responsible for the world and should take care and look after it. Stewardship is also about giving and sharing.

In the New Testament we note an example of congregational giving in reference to the Macedonian church (2 Corinthians 8:1). Although they were poor in material things, they excelled generosity and liberality. The lesson from this text is, that they gave themselves to God first, acknowledging that all things come from God. Their understanding of stewardship was dedication to God first and their giving was a true reflection of that relationship. The outcome was, the Macedonians gave far beyond expectation, because they have given themselves to God first. Stewardship also relates to the sharing of our gifts.

The use of gifts is the flip side of stewardship. We are not only stewards in giving, but in our respective congregations we are also challenged to offer our talents time within the parish through various ministries, personal, teaching, administrative, social, caring, music and any other form of ministry. Stewardship is part of our faith, trusting that God will call and equip us for ministry. As each one has received a gift, minister to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God (1 Peter 4:10).

In conclusion, this subject of stewardship is all comprehensive. We have all been blessed with gifts and as stewards, yet God wants us to be a conscious and willing steward who in thankfulness to Him, return everything in praise and with thanksgiving back to God. Like the Macedonian church, this could also be a time of personal renewal as we continue to journey into Lent after this time of Stewardship. Let this time of deep reflection and at the same time, be renewed in our hearts and minds, (Romans 12: 2.) May we echo the words and life of St Paul, the great steward who said, “I press forward to the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14). Let this also be a time of creativity around the offerings of the team.

Prayers and blessings

Canon Dr Desmond Lambrechts

Week 1

Theme: The earth and its resources (caring for the earth)

29 January 2023

Collect of the day

God of creation,
grant us the wisdom to care for your earth.
Help us to move towards behaviours
that are for the benefit of the environment,
so that future generations will have the privilege
of enjoying the earth and all its creatures.
Help us to follow your example in caring for the world with love.
Amen.

Readings: Micah 6:1-8

Ps 15

1 Corinthians 1 :18-31

Matthew 5:1-12

Micah sums up the call to action as doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with God. And then God calls us to action, to do our part, little by little and day by day. In saying this we can also ask what we are doing for the environment and how do we act justly towards the earth. Are we showing loving kindness to our mother earth or is it someone else's responsibility?

But God gave man a clear responsibility over creation as its caretaker. Genesis 2:15 reads: "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." From this we glean that God created everything and all things belong to God, and we, as caretakers, are accountable to Him. Our caretaker ship of creation should not be an abusive relationship. Our responsibility should be to sustain, protect and enhance His works so that all creation may fulfil the purposes God intended for it. We must manage the environment not simply for our own benefit, but for God's glory.

If we continue our selfish methods of only looking after man and not creation - we, as humans, will suffer the consequences. If creation falls, man falls. Caring for the non-human parts of His creation and preserving its intricate interactions is a core fundamental in Christianity. There are numerous things we can do in our everyday lives to help protect God's creation - such as conserving energy, reducing waste and recycling. Putting our faith into action will show others that our service to creation stems from our love for God, the creator.

The Church strives to conserve and manage energy appropriately. It has implemented a 'False Bay Go Green' committee to oversee that green initiatives are implemented. We have implemented food gardens and also planted trees as part of our commitment to the global forest. We have many clean-ups which aid in beautifying the environment. We promote the reduction of the use of single-use plastics and micro-plastics. With tons of single-use plastic being discarded every day, the purchase of plastic items should be avoided as much as possible, as the latter has led to tons of plastic flowing into our water bodies - both inland and oceans. This has caused major problems within the marine environment which has seen the deaths of various types of marine life due to suffocation and or ingesting micro-plastics in water. It is incumbent upon us as caretakers of His creation to remember to say NO to single-use plastics!

We need to realise that everything we take for granted is, in fact, God's gift for our needs. It is not ours to abuse and waste simply because it is there. We need to put things in perspective, to see the meaning in everything He created, and to experience joy in His creation. It is our moral responsibility, no matter who we are, to make choices that contribute to building a better world, not only for us now, but for future generations. Each one of us is responsible for our environment. We need to protect our common home so that all God's people can live healthy, fulfilling lives. We worship God the Creator more fully if we participate in the work of sustaining and restoring proper relations within His creation. By becoming more environmentally conscious and acting on it, we become more aware of the glory of His creation. Become an environmental ambassador by contacting the 'False Bay Go Green' team. Stewardship means taking care of something and in this instance taking care of the environment. Therefore I ask;

Questions for discussion

1. As an individual what have you done to take care of Gods earth.
2. How has the parish incorporated stewardship of the earth in their liturgy
3. What measure are in place as a diocese to ensure that the authorities at local, provincial or national levels are held responsible to protect the environment.

Week 2
Theme: Money and Personal Resources
05 February 2023

Collect: Almighty God, the author and giver of life, all things in heaven and earth are yours. Teach us to be content and be faithful with what we have and to use the resources you have given us wisely. Help us to acknowledge that you are a source of all things so that we may glorify your name, through Jesus Christ our Lord who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. Amen.

Readings: 1st Reading: Ecclesiastes 5:10-19
Psalm: 24
2nd Reading: 1 Timothy 6:3-10
Gospel: Luke 16:1-14

The expression, "what is in your wallet?" is very common. Men ensure that their money is safe in their pockets while women check their purses. We put our money and assets in banks for safekeeping and these are good measures to ensure our resources are safe. Have you ever wondered who those assets belong to? Have you stopped to think how you make that money? What would it be like if you were to lose all your money?

It is natural to think that what we get is ours due to our cleverness or the sweat of our forehead, yet everything we have is a gift from God and we are only caretakers of it.

What does the bible say about the stewardship of Money and Personal resources?

There is a good reason why when we bless the collection as Anglicans, we say "*Yours, Lord, is the greatness, the power, the glory, the splendour, and the majesty, for everything in heaven and on earth is yours. All things come from you, and of your own do we give you (APB 116)*". We pray this prayer in recognition of the fact that all that we have comes from God and we give to God what belongs to God.

Never say to yourself, "I have achieved this wealth with my own strength and energy" "Remember the Lord your God, He is the one who gives you the power to be successful (Deuteronomy 8:11-18).

Our first reading in Ecclesiastes warns us not to be lovers of money because we will never be satisfied. If we are lovers of money nothing will ever be enough. We should never find fulfillment and gratification in the accumulation of wealth and resources as this is what leads to greed and corruption. We should be content with what God entrusts us with even as we continue to work hard to better our lives.

Paul in his letter (1 Timothy 6:3-10) also addresses the love for money or God. He described the false teachers as selfish, ignorant especially driven by their love for money, He pinpoint that the goal for these teachers is to profit financially from preaching, yet the gospel is not meant to be a source of financial profit. If Christ is at the centre of our lives, we will be content with what we have rather than constantly lusting for more. Paul warns people that they must be careful if they are tempted to put money first in their lives because they can be trapped by many foolish and harmful desires to plunge them into destruction. It is a reminder that the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil which causes us to wander from our faith.

Our gospel reading calls us to be good stewards of God's resources that are entrusted to us. We are urged to be faithful even in the smallest of things.

Questions for discussion

The world is full of material resources, these resources offer us comfort BUT we were not made for comfort but for **greatness of God** because He created us to be good stewards of His resources.

1. Does the church say a lot to their parishioners about the importance of living a Christian lifestyle when it comes to money?
2. How can our parishioners commit themselves to the stewardship of money and how can they reach out to the needy?
3. As a Diocese which is mainly supported by the parishes in terms of finance, do we give joyfully, sacrificially in order to boast the financial position of the Dioceses?

Collect of the Day

Holy and righteous God,
you set before us life and death:
grant us grace in the face of many temptations
to seek the mind of Christ
and choose eternal life
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever
Amen.

Readings: Deuteronomy 30: 15-20

Psalm 119:1-8

1 Corinthians 3:1-9

Matthew 5:21-37

Introduction

It is the 3rd Sunday in the month as we continue our focus on stewardship. God has entrusted us with the responsibility to use aright the talents and gifts which God has given to us. When we talk about stewardship, talents, and gifts, it is about being in service of the Lord in his church. Often, the way I use my talents showcase me, being in service of God and building my own little kingdom here on earth. Christian service on the other hand, using our gifts and talents, is to demonstrate our love for Christ and his church.

The choice

In the Old Testament reading the people of Israel was given a choice between life and death, whether they will remain faithful unto God or face death, the withdrawal of God's countenance and blessings from them. There was no grey areas or points of indecision for the people, it was as clear as daylight. You commit fully or face death, yet as the people of God we do not want to make these decisive decisions, we want to hold onto benefits from both sides. We are challenged to the core of our being in how we will use God's gifts which we have received to worship and glorify him through our service in the church. God has given us these talents and gifts, if we do not use it, we will face the possibilities of losing a God given talent. We are reminded in the gospel of Matthew, 25: 24-30 of the consequence of being afraid to use our God given talents.

The gifts

We are reminded in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, about the different gifts which God bestows upon us his children through the one Spirit. I have a question for each and every one of us this morning, 'My brothers and sisters, do you know your God given talents?'. My friends, in Christ pray earnestly to God to reveal to you your talents and gifts. Speak to your minister or someone you trust about your gifts and talents if you are unsure about it. Remember that whatever gift and talent you have it is not to show off but to worship, praise and glorify God as you use it in service of God in His church.

Choose right

We are reminded in the Old Testament reading to make a choice about remaining in a committed relationship with God. This morning we are being challenged to make the right decision in using our God given talents to further foster and build our relationship with God as committed Christians and with one another as we expand the kingdom of God through the work of His church.

May we make the right choice in using our God given talents and gifts to demonstrate our love for Christ through our service in the church.

Possible questions for discussion

1. Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 12 about the different gifts given by the same Spirit. As an individual do you know what are your God given talents and gifts?
2. We are reminded in Ephesians 4:4-6 that we should try to keep and build the unity in the church. How do you use your God given talent and gift to build the unity within your local congregation and the broader community.
3. Matthew 25:24-30 reminds us about the consequences of not using our God given talents and gifts. How do you use your God given talents and gifts to expand God's Kingdom in the Diocese of False Bay, through your witness in your parish?

Week 4

Theme: Involvement in the local Parish (deepening of personal and sacramental life)

Transfiguration Sunday

19 February 2023

Collect of the day

Holy God,
on the Mount of Transfiguration
you revealed your Son as the Christ:
transform our lives in his image,
write your law of love on our hearts,
and make us prophets of your shining splendour;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, in glory everlasting.
Amen.

Readings: Exodus 24:12-18

Psalm 2

2 Peter 1:16-21

Matthews 17:1-9

The Transfiguration of Jesus provides us with a glimpse of who Jesus is. This visible sign of his preincarnate glory-his radiant face and clothes white as light - was for the benefit of Peter, James, and John. The transfiguration of Jesus and the appearance of Elijah and Moses left the disciples falling to the ground in terror. Jesus, true to his compassionate nature, touched and calmed them. This transfiguration reminds us that Jesus is the fulfilment of the Law (Moses) and the prophets (Elijah).

The appearance of Elijah and Moses on the mountain bears witness to Jesus, the Son of God, the one whom God loves and the one we obey. The disciples experienced rebuke from Jesus because they did not focus on Jesus but wanted to build tabernacles.

We should focus on, obey and glorify Jesus, for this is what God requires of us. We are in the image and likeness of Jesus (Genesis 1:26-28), who served and included others by washing their feet, preaching the gospel, healing the sick, and sharing his ministry. His life and ministry transformed others.

Our love for God grounds our transformation. It starts inside through the circumcision of our hearts. Our transformation will become visible on the outside in the same way as the radiance of Jesus, as seen by Peter, James, and John. Outward signs of transformation translate into visible works or sacrifice because faith without works is dead (James 2:26). Our faith that results in work received a kick-start at confirmation, which equipped and transformed us for worship, service, and witness through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Our increased involvement in the life of the parish is visible in various ministries and programmes. Furthermore, our participation in the Eucharist strengthens our personal and sacramental life. The Eucharist reminds us of the sacrificial nature of Christ and assists us in our transformation process to become a radiant light in our parish and community.

We remind ourselves of the benefits of prayer, fasting, and giving as we journey toward Lent. We follow the example of Christ, our true sacrifice- the one who gave his life for us. Giving our time through prayer and service deepens our relationship with God. We nurture our gifts and talents through commitment, love, and involvement in lay ministry, prayer groups, outreach programmes, council, and various programmes within our local parish.

Our prayer is to be a blessing to the local parish and community through our increased involvement in our local parish.

Questions for discussion

1. "Our mission as a Diocese is to- Promote and celebrate the richness of our diversity as Anglicans..." How do we aid and re-imagine church on the Diocesan level in the radiant light of our transfigured Christ?
2. Do our current worship and liturgy reflect the context of the parish, which allow for nurturing gifts and "mobilising of the people of God for Christian service?"
3. God blessed all of us with beautiful gifts and talents. Are we utilising these God-given talents for "outreach to the young and others in need?"

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