

What are our call and challenge as stewards/disciples?

In a world influenced by consumerism and greed a steward/disciple is called and challenged to be a voice and a presence for another way, the way of compassion and generosity, shown most clearly in Jesus.

Therefore, in response to Jesus' call and challenge, we in the United Church of Christ, *expect and encourage one another: to be disciples in all aspects of life, to give as each needs to give and as others need to be helped, and to decide what gifts are given in and through the United Church of Christ.*

So let us, in every setting of the United Church of Christ, invite each other to be giving disciples and give in and through the United Church of Christ.

*(General Synod Resolution,
Toward a New Vision of Giving)*



For more information contact your local United Church of Christ.

STEWARDSHIP



Practices of Faith
in the United
Church of Christ

Foundation

Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is God's good pleasure to give you the realm. Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

— Luke 12:32-34 (adapted from NRSV)

The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work.

—2 Corinthians 9:6-8 (NRSV)

Who is a steward?

A steward is a person who receives and recognizes God's abundance.

A steward is a person who praises God with generous giving.

A steward is a person who recognizes and cares for that which God has entrusted to him or her.

A steward is a person who lives in harmony with God's creation.

How do stewards live?

Stewards live as disciples of Jesus. In baptism, God claims us and calls us to new life as disciples of Jesus.

*Disciples of Jesus live in this way—
having compassion for all,
inviting all to receive God's salvation—
wholeness, health and truth,
working for justice and peace,
reaching the lonely, sick and troubled,
feeding the hungry, and celebrating hope
with all of God's diverse people.*

(General Synod Resolution, *Toward a New Vision of Giving*)

How is being a steward expressed in my life?

Being a good steward can be thought of in three ways, giving of *time, self, and wealth*. These three do not exhaust the meaning of stewardship but serve as a guide for living the life of a steward.

Today time has great value. We are often very busy, and yet we are asked to share some of our precious time without expecting any return. For some people this means working at a church-related ministry, serving on a board or committee, teaching children or adults, leading a bible study group or helping at worship. Others share their time in community service, in working with the poor, hungry, or homeless, or in helping people build homes, and learn computer skills. Good stewards may also advocate for fair housing. Whatever a steward does, by sharing some time, the steward helps to build something greater than any one of us.



The giving of self is closely related to the giving of time. Each of us has particular gifts that have been given us for the building up of God's reign, and for the good of all people. By our sharing we commit our lives, as disciples of Jesus, to the service of others. In our writing and advocating for justice or in our baking bread and writing poetry, we are putting ourselves at the service of all.

The third category, that of wealth, can be the most challenging of the three. For many the use of money is an intensely personal subject, yet as stewards we are called into a more generous accounting of our use of money. In many Christian churches the benchmark for the giving of money is the *tithe*, or 10 percent, of our resources. In the UCC tithing is held in high regard by many as the model for giving and as a starting point for the faithful use of money. Tithing is sometimes seen in the context of *proportional giving*. Proportional giving challenges us to consider what percent of our income we will give, without restriction, to those places and programs that do the work we find meaningful. In this case the gift may be higher, or in some cases lower, than a tithe but *proportional giving* encourages us to be intentional about giving and, in some cases,

challenges us to increase our giving in proportion to what we continue to receive. The decision about how much is necessary to keep and how much to give away is a spiritual decision.

What does it mean to be a good steward in the United Church of Christ?

Good stewards can support the ministry of the UCC by being generous in their support of their local church. Their gifts also support the work of the wider church. The wider church is the UCC in the Conferences, Associations, National ministries, and UCC-related institutions. Gifts to the local church support not only local ministries, but a variety of programs, mission partnerships, regional gatherings, ecumenical partnerships and justice ministries, and many other things as well.

In addition to regular gifts to the church, there are opportunities presented to the local churches of the UCC to give special offerings for a wide range of needs, from disaster relief and compassionate care for our neighbors to new church starts and support for retired church workers.

