

Above all,
clothe yourself
with love
which binds
everything together
in perfect harmony.

Colossians 3:14-15

And let the
Peace of Christ
rule in your
hearts.

St. Augustine's Anglican Church

Biblical Stewardship 366

Stewardship of Ourselves

*How and why we must look after the Physical, Mental,
Emotional and Spiritual Selves
that God has given us.*

Stewardship is about how we use the gifts God has given us to work with God to make the world a better place, to help build the Kingdom of God on Earth.

It is Fall now and it is many months since we met together in our church building, however, we can take comfort in the knowledge that we, the people of St. Augustine's, are the Church, whether we meet on-line or in a building. So, it is time to get on with Church things, such as planning and year-round Stewardship. My computer tells me – 'Continue where you left off'. So here goes!!



A Note. From now on I will be calling these communications 'Bulletins' rather than 'Newsletters', this is so they are not confused with Barb Ash's excellent on-line Parish Newsletter.

First a Reminder - What is Biblical Stewardship?

Stewardship is about how we care for what God has entrusted to us. Biblical Stewardship is about how we use scripture as our guide, and the gifts we have been given, in order to do this.

Although money is involved and is particularly important at various points, Stewardship is most definitely not primarily about money. You could be the financially poorest person you can imagine and still be an effective steward!

- Stewardship is everything we think, say, and do after we first say, "I believe in God...."
- Stewardship is a fact, you took it on at your baptism, and confirmed it each time you repeated the Baptismal Covenant.
- However, you can choose to be a good, caring, effective steward, or you can choose to do nothing. Read the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30), or Luke's version (Luke: 19:11-27), carefully! Jesus does not have nice things to say about those who do nothing!

*Christ has no body on earth now
but yours, no hands but yours,
no feet but yours.*

*Yours are the eyes through
which he looks with compassion
on the world,*

*Yours are the feet with which he
walks to do good.*

*Yours are the hands with which
he blesses all the world.*

St Teresa of Ávila

God wants us to help in building the Kingdom of God on earth.

That means a transformed Earth, the place of justice and peace that we pray for every time we say, 'Your kingdom come on earth....'

Why does God need our help? St. Teresa of Avila seemed to have a pretty good idea.

Our whole self, body, mind, and spirit is God's gift to each of us. As Good Stewards we need to look after these gifts, cherish, develop, and care for them, so that we can use them to make the world a better place. God will inspire us, protect us, strengthen, and lead us, but as St. Teresa puts it, ours are the only bodies that that God can use to do the physical work. This means we need to look after ourselves.

As I wrote in the Easter Bulletin, who could possibly have imagined how incredibly apt our present theme of self-care would become? Now it seems the whole world is aware that if we do not look after ourselves, there is very little that we can do to help God's world and God's people. Even as we weep at the present tragedy, as God's people we know that when we look back at these times, there will be good things that will have come out of the darkness and suffering.



I totally expect that we will become better Stewards because of our experiences, and we will have clearer understandings of our role as Christ's hands and feet voice and heart. (At a safe distance of course). *Even the present imperatives that we wear masks and social distance, are in place because that that is how we take care of each other. And if looking after God's people is not Stewardship, I do not know what is!*

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who consoles us in all our affliction, so that we maybe able to console those who are in any affliction.
(2 Corinthians 1: 3-4)

It is amazing how relevant and current scripture can be if we read it with open minds!

So, what is the next phase of our theme concerning self-care?

Prior to the Pandemic and everything shutting down, we had looked at how we care our physical, mental, and emotional selves. To complete this focus on Stewardship of Ourselves, we still need to think about spiritual health, and it will be to that we will turn next.

What do we mean by Spirituality and how do we take care of our spiritual selves?

First, some definitions.

Spirituality involves the recognition of a feeling, or sense, or belief, that there is something greater than ourselves, some-thing more to being human than sensory experience. And that greater whole of which we are part, is divine in nature.

What is the difference between religion and spirituality? (According to Wikipedia and others.)

- **Religion** is a specific set of organised beliefs and practices, usually shared by a community or group.
- **Spirituality** is more of an individual practice and has to do with having a sense of peace and purpose. Spirituality is linked to many important aspects of human functioning, spiritual people usually have positive relationships, high self-esteem, are optimistic, have meaning and purpose in life, and they often feel connected to something greater than themselves, something that we call God.



Very often spiritual people are also religious.

Here at St. A's and at other churches, our form of spirituality involves following Jesus Christ, and seeing in Jesus the reality and nature of God and living in a manner that helps God make the world a better place.

Religious spirituality of this kind calls for action on behalf of God and this is Stewardship.

Hopefully, this makes it clear why caring for our spiritual selves is important if we want to be good stewards. And to knowing how to do this is where we turn next.....

It is generally known that no two people are exactly alike. Even identical twins have differing experiences and so live different lives. So, it must follow, that the way each of us cares for our individual spirituality differs from person to person. It is important that each person chooses a style of spiritual practice that suits him or her.

What will follow in the next Bulletins are brief descriptions of a variety of spiritual practices.




WE ARE ALL UNIQUE

Hopefully, you might find one or more to be helpful as you seek to grow your relationship with the Divine and to develop the sense of purpose that you have for your life. It is important to understand that Spiritual Styles are individual.

God created us as individuals so our ways of relating to God vary. It is important to recognise that there is no 'best' or 'only' way of doing this, and understand that others, even those close to you, might express their spirituality differently from you.

If you sincerely wish to explore and grow your relationship with God, all will be well.

So, let's get started!

This is not a difficult or strange thing to do. The German Theologian **Meister Eckhart**, born in 1260, put it this way. So, to start with, why not try this? 

If the only prayer you ever said in your whole life was 'Thank You' that would suffice.

More ideas next time. Val McCormack October 2020