

## Mission Driven Stewardship

In 2015, the Diocese of Ontario began an interactive, inclusive process to develop a new diocesan vision and strategy; a vision and strategy that would build on the accomplishments of the past several years while providing leadership and guidance to our congregations as we step out, *living boldly into the world*. This culminated in the adoption of a new



vision and strategy at our Diocesan Synod in November of 2016. Rooted in the Gospel of Christ, it calls on all of us to become connected and engaged in three areas; Investment in Ministry, Mission Driven Stewardship, and Community Partnerships. Mission Driven Stewardship is described first of all **Understanding the Need, Partnering for Mission, and Building the Kingdom of God in our neighbourhoods**. In other words, *what is God calling us to do in this place; at this time?*

We know that the unfortunate reality of life in some of our parishes today is most often one of survival, forcing many of our congregations to look inward. We believe that the future of our parishes lies outside our doors. As Walter Brueggemann wrote in his essay *Enough is Enough*, “What if it is true? What if one of the links between the Creator’s generosity and the neighbour’s needs is us?” We are not naïve enough to believe that either of these overall benefits or outcomes will happen overnight. This effort is the beginning of a journey; a new way of life.

In *The S Word*, Archbishop Douglas Hambidge wrote that “the more he studied stewardship, the more convinced he became that it was one of the main reasons our church struggles to be the Church, and in some cases to even survive.”<sup>1</sup> He concluded that until we “stepped away from what had become the traditional approach to stewardship, the situation would not improve. This doesn’t mean that fundraising is wrong, or that any mention of money is bad. As people of God, we are meant to be generous and we will need to talk about money. But Stewardship is something different. It has nothing to do with budgets or deficits. It has to do with our relationship with God. Even if our church has a healthy bank balance, we would still have precisely the same need to give.”<sup>1</sup>

As we mentioned in the introduction, we won’t achieve sustainable, mission driven stewardship without healthy congregations; and we won’t have healthy congregations if we aren’t seen as serving our communities. This simple reality underlines the critical nature of becoming more engaged with our communities and with each other; which is why stewardship has to be approached differently. We all know that stewardship is comprised of time, talent, and treasure. The 1<sup>st</sup> epistle of Peter, chapter 4, verse 10, tells us “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” Peter is speaking about relationships and the importance of developing and maintaining partnerships with other organizations. These gifts are at least, if not more important than money because they allow us to engage with others in ways that help demonstrate and define God’s unconditional love for all.

If you would like to discuss how Mission Driven Stewardship can help your community and congregation please contact either Doug Cowley at [scdcdoug@gmail.com](mailto:scdcdoug@gmail.com) or Wayne Varley at [wvarley@ontario.anglican.ca](mailto:wvarley@ontario.anglican.ca).