

St. Augustine's Anglican Church

Biblical Stewardship 365

Bulletin 2 October 2021

*Behold!
I am making
all things
new.*

Rev. 21:5



Chernobyl then and now!

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

In the early morning of April 26, 1986, the core of the Chernobyl nuclear facility in Russia melted down and then exploded. The accident spewed massive amounts of radioactive material into the surrounding area forcing a mass evacuation of the nearby villages. Many wild animals died from the direct toxicity of the radiation and 1,000 acres of forest died within months. This region has remained closed to most human activity for the past many years.

Yet today, the area is far from a barren wasteland. Many of the most radioactive isotopes have decayed or washed out of the region in rain. Birds, rodents, elk, lynx, wolves, wild boar, and deer have all been spotted living within the borders of the zone, and the deserted cities and villages are filled with new growth and green trees.

Behold,
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This Year's Stewardship Theme.

We have used this theme before. It was quite a long while ago a during a time when the parish was facing change. Today it seems that God is again drawing us toward something new, and urging us to step into this next phase of our lives together with confidence and energy. I opened this Bulletin with the story of Chernobyl because the resurgence of life, animals and vegetation, in an area of nuclear devastation is truly miraculous. If God can be creating a fecund garden in a truly devastated zone, I think we can trust God to guide us along the path set before us.

However, it is important to remember that as good Stewards we are expected to use the gifts we have been given to do our part to make the future happen.

Yet before we look at the situation in our own parish, both challenges and blessings, it seems appropriate to recognise that we seem to be living in a period of change in the wider world. God seems to be at work in some remarkable ways. In no particular order, here are some of them. There are many more.

- Our attention has been drawn somewhat starkly to the situation with our first nations people. The unmarked graves of children, the disaster of the 'Sixties Scoop', the unfairness of the Indian Act, all point towards the twin injustices of racism and colonialism. Our God demands justice and fairness for all God's people. Change is in the air!
- The 'Me Too!' movement has drawn our attention to gender-based discrimination in all its forms. 'God created humankind in God's image, male and female God created them'.(Gen.:1:27) The authors of Genesis did not know about gay people, non-binary people, and so on, but I am 100% certain that God created them to be who they are. Have we learned yet that discrimination against any of God's people is wrong? What are we doing about it?
- What about God's gift of our planet and how we have mistreated it? If we ever doubted that we are headed for disaster, then last summer, together with rising seas, should have woken us up. God provided lots of evidence! "Sooner or later, we all sit at the banquet of our consequences." (Robert Louis Stevenson)

- What about sharing what God has given us with those in need? Have we shared food, medicine, vaccines, knowledge, etc. adequately? The swollen bellies and fly-infested faces that we see on TV stir our consciences. These are also God's children, and we are becoming increasingly aware of their plight.
- What about the amount of violence so evident in certain forms of entertainment and in some of our homes and communities? God gave us a choice long ago and reminded us that behaving violently is a choice we make.

(Genesis 4:7)

God has repeatedly drawn our attention to these and many more matters. How can we ignore this and call ourselves 'God's People,' if we do not do all we can to right these wrongs?

The actions we might take are Stewardship: working in collaboration with God to make the world a fairer, kinder, place.

We are all called to do what we can, with what we have, where God has placed us!

These examples and many others are less dramatic than Chernobyl, but God continues to renew creation and we can see it, feel it, and give thanks for it.

**'Behold, I am making all things new.
I will be their God and they will be my children.' (Rev.5b, 7b)**

How do we know this is so?

St. Matthew seemed to think it is particularly important that we never forget this as he both opened and closed his Gospel with an assurance of God's eternal presence in Jesus Christ.

- ***'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel.'* (Matt. 1:23)**
(Emmanuel is not really a name but a short phrase which means 'God is with us.')
- As he commissioned his disciples, Jesus said, ***'Remember, I AM with you to the end of the age.'*** (Matt. 20.) ('I AM' is the name of God given to Moses at the Burning Bush Ex. 3:14)

Most assuredly this is not yet 'the end of The Age'! Jesus assures all generations of God's continuing presence as we seek to do the work of Stewardship, collaborating with God to build the Kingdom of God here in our world, our country, our family, our neighbourhood, and our Church.

In the next bulletin we will change the focus from Stewardship of ourselves and the wider world, to Stewardship of our Parish.

During this time of Covid we have been forced to do things differently. But we have coped! God guided people to our community to supply the expertise we need. New people sit next to long-time members in our pews. (Socially distanced of course!) We have new opportunities for spiritual growth, discussion, and learning. There is an expanding openness in our sharing. There is a new programme for children. The atmosphere, which has always been supportive and inviting, is now even more so.



What is God doing at St. A's? Something is changing in a wonderful way. We will be looking at this in more detail next time.

Behold! I am making all things new! (Even at St. A's!)