# Opening Prayer

# Called to be Good Stewards

## Gather

## Listen

In our Gospel reading from Luke 4:18-19 we hear about how Jesus was called by God to his mission.

‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
   because he has anointed me
     to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
   and recovery of sight to the blind,
     to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.’

## Respond

**Leader**: We are sent to bring good news to the poor and to families and communities everywhere:

**Response**: The Spirit of the Lord is upon us.

**Leader**: We are sent to proclaim release to captives, to those whose lives are threatened and whose rights are denied:

**Response**: The Spirit of the Lord is upon us.

**Leader**: We are sent to recover sight for the blind and to see the beauty of God’s creation:

**Response**: The Spirit of the Lord is upon us.

**Leader**: We are sent to let oppressed people go free and to defend the rights of the poor and vulnerable:

**Response**: The Spirit of the Lord is upon us.

**Leader**: We are sent to proclaim jubilee: God’s reign of justice, peace, and equality for all peoples.

**Response**: The Spirit of the Lord is upon us.

Gracious God, you have sent your Spirit upon us so that we might be your presence in the world. May your Spirit sent us forth to use our time, talent, and treasure for the good of all peoples. We ask this through Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

## Go Forth

We believe that we are part of God’s dream for the church and the world,

and that God is shaping us, as the potter shapes the clay,

into the kind of human and faith community

that is the dream in God’s heart.

We believe that God has called and chosen us

as the potter carefully chooses a lump of clay

to make what the potter has in mind.

We believe that when God sees that the church and world

are not coming out right, not according to the divine dream,

God does not discard the clay and take another piece,

but reworks the same clay, shaping and molding it

with firm but gentle hands, on the wheel of life.

We commit ourselves to shaping with gentle hands

the fragile and vulnerable clay, each precious person given to us.

We will treat them with the same loving patience we ourselves feel

in the hands of the divine potter.

We will open our ears to listen like disciples

as God leads us forward on the next part of the journey,

the journey we are on together.

And we will join hands as we continue along the way,

the way of salvation.

(*Prayer without Borders*. CRS)

# Handout #1

# Images of the Good Life

## Your View of the Good Life

What does the “good life” mean for you or your family? Check off the items that represent your view of the good life. Feel free to add new items that are important for you or your family.

* Owning a nice home
* Having a new car
* A loving family
* Financial security
* A pension
* Medical insurance
* Having the latest high tech consumer product (HD televisions, I-pods, computer)
* Having (or getting) a good education
* Having a good paying job
* Having friends
* Playing sports
* Good health
* Volunteering time to help people
* Recreation
* Spending time together as a family (e.g., family meals, holidays, family activities)
* Staying in touch with extended family
* Participating actively in the life of the faith community (e.g., Sunday worship programs, gatherings)
* Taking a vacation once or more each year
* Buying the newest fashion clothes
* Participating in the life of my community and neighborhood
* Being physically fit
* Having time for entertainment, such as going to the movies or concerts
* Having new toys or games or music or online subscriptions

Add other items that are important to you or your family?

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## Purchasing the Good Life

If you, as an individual, had $500 to spend today, or your family had $1000 to spend today on the good life, what would you purchase? Use the coupons to register your choices. Use as many $50 dollar coupons as necessary for each item you would purchase, but you cannot spend more than your allotment. After you have finished, reflect on what your choice(s) tell you or your family about your vision of the good life.

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## The View of the Good Life in our Society and Culture

Identify the products and message advertised in the TV commercials and magazine ads.

Product Message/Values about the Good Life

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### Reflection Questions

* How do the commercials/advertisements present a picture of the good life? How do you feel about what you have seen?
* If you had these products, what difference would it make in your life? What do these commercials/advertisements try to convince you that you personally need in order to have the good life? Do you really need it?

# Handout #2

# The Christian View of the Good Life

The seventh and tenth commandments direct us to develop a spirit of generosity and service, to give thanks to God for all that we have, and to be less attached to material goods as a way to obtain happiness. The seventh and tenth commandments require us to be generous with others, giving more than is necessary. These commandments also direct us to share our possessions with others, especially those who do not have food, shelter, or decent clothing.

God created the world for all creatures and called humans to stewardship. As stewards, or caretakers, we are called to use natural resources well and protect the environment for everyone now and in the future; to respect all life as a gift from God; and to share time, money, and talent to help others.

## 1. Jesus and the Good Life

***Do Not Store-Up Treasures on Earth*—The Parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:16-21)**

Then he told them a parable: “The land of a rich man produced abundantly. And he thought to himself, ‘What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?’ Then he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.’ But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God.”

***Sell All That You Own and Give to the Poor*—The Rich Ruler (Luke 18:18-23)**

A certain ruler asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: ‘You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; Honor your father and mother.’” He replied, “I have kept all these since my youth.” When Jesus heard this, he said to him, “There is still one thing lacking. Sell all that you own and distribute the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” But when he heard this, he became sad; for he was very rich.

***Give from Your Heart*—The Widow’s Contribution (Mark 12:41-44)**

He sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. Then he called his disciples and said to them, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.”

***Share Your Wealth*—Jesus and Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10)**

He entered Jericho and was passing through it. A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today.” So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. All who saw it began to grumble and said, “He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner.” Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, “Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.” Then Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.”

***See the Lord Where People Are In Need and Act—*Parable of the Last Judgment (Matthew 25:31-40)**

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’”

***Do Not Worry about Your Life*—Luke 12:22-34**

He said to his disciples, “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? If then you are not able to do so small a thing as that, why do you worry about the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith! And do not keep striving for what you are to eat and what you are to drink, and do not keep worrying. For it is the nations of the world that strive after all these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, strive for his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. 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.

***Share Your Possessions*—The Story of the First Christians (Acts 4:32-37)**

Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. There was a Levite, a native of Cyprus, Joseph, to whom the apostles gave the name Barnabas (which means ‘son of encouragement’). He sold a field that belonged to him, then brought the money, and laid it at the apostles’ feet.

## 2. Reflections on the 7th and 10th Commandments

To keep these commandments, it’s important that we don’t over-value our possessions or crave more and more. (That’s a challenge since we live in a consumeristic society). We also need to be just in our treatment of others, respect their rights, and honor their human dignity. Our goal should be solidarity with all peoples. Solidarity helps us to see ourselves as one human family across the globe.

In creating the universe, God entrusted the resources of the earth to the stewardship of all people. The Christian tradition upholds the principle that the universal destination of the goods of the earth is meant for the common good of all people. This doesn’t mean that we are against the ownership of private property.

Human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met. Therefore, every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities—to one another, to our families, and to the larger society.

We show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. Care for the earth is a requirement of our faith. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God’s creation. This environmental challenge has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored.

It can never be stated often enough that love and care for the poor are a major priority for every Christian. The central interest of Christian social teaching is justice for all, but especially for the helpless and the poor. It involves the removal of the symptoms and causes of poverty and injustice.

The tenth commandment challenges us to live a genuine spirit of poverty and generosity of heart toward those most in need.

Christian discipleship means, among other things, working to ensure that all people have access to what makes them fully human and fosters their human dignity: faith, education, health care, housing, employment, and leisure.

## 3. The Good Steward

The Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30)

“For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money. After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, ‘Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, ‘Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, ‘Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.’ But his master replied, ‘You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

# Handout #3

# Stewardship Ideas for Children

“A steward is a person who takes care of something belonging to someone else. As Christians, we believe that everything we have comes from God. God has asked us to take care of what he has given us and to use it wisely” (Elizabeth Johnson).

How can you show thanks for all the gifts God has given you? Here are a few examples of how you can share your Time, Talent, and Treasure.

## Time

Think of the ways you can use your time to help others.

* Take care of your younger brother or sister
* Talk with your grandparents
* Visit a sick friend
* Help a friend with homework
* Do your chores around the house

## Talent

Think of the ways you can share your gifts or talents with others.

* If you are a good reader, you can read to your younger brother or sister, at a child care center, or to an elderly person in a nursing home.
* If you like to cook, you can bake cookies for holiday dinners for those in need.
* If you like to draw, you can teach others to draw or you can make posters and signs for church programs.
* If you like to sing, you can join the children’s choir at church.
* If you make friends easily, you can find lonely children and make them feel good.
* If you like to be outdoors, you can help a disabled or elderly neighbor with yard work.

## Treasure

Even though you might not have much money, you do have a treasure. Think of the ways you can share your treasure with others.

* Save a little of your allowance or money you make doing chores and add this to what your family is sharing with those in need.
* Donate some of your favorite books to a local childcare center or a shelter for homeless families.
* Donate clothes to children who are poor or live in a shelter for homeless families.
* Recycle your family’s newspapers, magazines, cans, and bottles to help protect the earth.
* Collect food from your family and neighborhood to give to food banks and soup kitchens.

# Handout #4

# The Practice of Stewardship

Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received (1 Peter 4:10).

What identifies a steward? Safeguarding material and human resources and using them responsibly are one answer; so is generous giving of time, talent, and treasure. But being a Christian steward means more. As Christian stewards, we receive God’s gifts gratefully, cultivate them responsibly, share them lovingly in justice with others, and return them with increase to the Lord.

## Being a Good Steward of Your Treasure

Think for a Moment. . .

* How do you already use your treasure, your wealth, to the benefit of others, especially those in need?
* How can you find new ways to share your treasure? What financial priorities will need to change in order to be a good steward of your treasure? How can you re-allocate monies?
* How can you work together with others to use your treasure and to raise funds for important projects?

### Ideas for Being a Good Steward of Your Treasure

Here are a few ideas to get you thinking about how to share your treasure:

* Give a donation to UNICEF and their efforts to meet the essential needs of poor children all around the world through education, nutrition, and health care. Go to the UNICEF web site.
* Give a donation—large or small—to Habitat for Humanity to build a home in the U.S. or another country around the world. Build a house online with Habitat’s interactive tool. Donate the cost of items such as nails, shingles, and plumbing. Consider becoming a monthly donor. Go to the Habitat for Humanity web site.
* Donate money or books to Room to Read. Room to Read partners with local communities throughout the developing world to establish schools, libraries, and other educational infrastructure. Donate new, children's storybooks, ABC and 1,2,3 books, picture books for young children, hardcover books that are thick and durable, educational books that are fun - science, geography, math, world history, etc. Go to the Room to Read web site for more information.
* Protect the environment through the Nature Conservancy and preserve the plants, animals, and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive. Adopt-A-Rainforest through Rainforest Alliance. Protect Endangered Species through the World Wildlife Fund. Go to their web sites for more information.
* Support a village in a developing country by providing live animals for villagers to develop their own herds. Check out the Heifer Project website for more information.
* Support a project of a relief organization (World Vision, Lutheran Relief, Catholic Relief Services, and many more) that help communities build a clinic, a source of potable water, decent classrooms, farming, and so on.
* Donate money to Food for the Poor to provide direct relief assistance to the poor by purchasing specifically requested materials and distributing them through the churches and charity organizations already operating in areas of need. Purchase a gift from their catalog, support a project, recycle inkjet and toner cartridges. Go to their web site for more information.
* Sponsor children and the aging through Unbound (formerly Christian Foundation for Children and Aging) and connect with a poor child or aging friend at a mission site. The poor that CFCA serves suffer from malnutrition, inadequate medical care, and/or poor housing, with little chance for the children to receive an education. Go to their web site for sponsorship information.
* Purchase ethical/fair trade products through Ten Thousand Villages, SERRV, Global Exchange, and other organizations that support farmers and artisans in poor communities pay for food, education, health care and housing. Fair Trade encompasses a range of goods, from agricultural products like coffee, chocolate, tea, and bananas, to handcrafts like clothing, household items, and decorative arts. Go to the web sites of the organizations and discover the products you can purchase.

## Being a Good Steward of Your Time

Think for a Moment. . .

* How do you currently use your time to serve the needs of others as a good steward?
* How can you find new ways to use your time as a good steward?
* What will need to change in your schedule to use your time in service to others?

### Ideas for Being a Good Steward of Your Time

In just one or two hours per week or month, you could. . .

* Prepare and serve a meal at a soup kitchen or homeless shelter.
* Collect food for the local food bank.
* Collect clothes for those in need at homeless shelters and childcare centers in a poor community.
* Visit the elderly at a senior citizen facility.
* Visit the homebound and/or do grocery shopping for them.
* Tutor children.
* Serve in a church ministry be being a youth leader or teacher or serving on a leadership committee.

In just one day each year, you could. . .

* Help the Red Cross during local emergencies.
* Participate in Crop Walk from Church World Services.
* Work with the Special Olympics.
* Weatherize, repair, and/or paint a home for those in need. Contact your local Habitat for Humanity chapter.
* Plant trees in your community through the Global Releaf Program and National Arbor Day Foundation programs. See their web sites for more information.
* Organize a “clean-up the community day” and mobilize teams of people to clean up litter and junk in specific areas of the community.

In one week each year, you could. . . .

* Build a house with Habitat for Humanity in the U.S. through a Habitat “volunteer vacation.”
* Organize a craft fair featuring ethical/fair trade crafts, or create a gift catalog for your church community and sell fair trade items. For more information go the web sites for Ten Thousand Villages, SERRV, and Global Exchange. Consider organizing a fair trade gift sale at Christmas or Easter or anytime throughout the year.

## Being a Good Steward of Your Talent

Think for a Moment. . .

* What are some of your gifts and talents? What gifts and talents do you have because of your education, job, activities, hobbies, and interests?
* How are you already sharing your gifts and talents to benefit others—at church, in the community, in the world?
* How can you find new ways to share your gifts and talents?

### Ideas for Being a Good Steward of Your Gifts and Talents

Here are a few ideas to get you thinking about how to share your talents:

* Use your gifts and talents in service to the elderly in your community. For example: create a network of people to drive elderly persons, do fall and spring housecleaning for the homebound, write letters for nursing home residents who can no longer write, entertain the elderly in nursing homes.
* Use your gifts and talents in service to the children in your community. For example: tutor children, teach computer skills, get involved in a recreation or an arts and crafts program, help with summer programs for children, be a Big Brother or Big Sister, coach children in sports.
* Weatherize, repair, and paint homes for those in need. Check with the local Habit for Humanity affiliate in your area.
* Use your gifts and talents in service to people with disabling conditions. For example: work with Special Olympics or programs for the developmentally challenged, read for the blind, offer a shuttle service, make your church facility accessible for all.
* Use your gifts and talents in service to the church community through ministries and programs.
* Share your time and talent by donating goods and materials to an organization initiated and led by poor and low-income people as they empower themselves and become leaders in their communities.

# Handout #5

# The Stewardship of Time, Talent, and Treasure

Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received (1 Peter 4:10).

Identify specific ways you will practice stewardship. Commit to at least one specific practice for time, talent, and treasure. For families, commit to at least one practice of time, talent, and treasure as a whole family, as well as for each family member. Write your commitment in each of the following boxes and then post your commitments on the refrigerator or wall at home to remind you of how you will practice stewardship.

**Stewardship of Time**

**Stewardship of Talents**

**Stewards of Our Treasure**

# Handout #6

# Stewardship Prayer Card

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| **Stewardship Prayer Card**Generous God, thank you for all the gifts you have given me—my life, my family, my friends,my time, talents, and treasure. I know that all I have received is from your hand. Gracious and loving God, you call us to be stewards of your abundance, the caretakers of all you have entrusted to us. Help us to always use your gifts wisely and teach us to share them generously. Send the Holy Spirit to work through us, bringing your message of love to those we serve. May our faithful stewardship bear witness to the love of Jesus Christ in our lives. We pray with grateful hearts, in Jesus’ name. Amen. | **Stewardship Prayer Card**Generous God, thank you for all the gifts you have given me—my life, my family, my friends,my time, talents, and treasure. I know that all I have received is from your hand. Gracious and loving God, you call us to be stewards of your abundance, the caretakers of all you have entrusted to us. Help us to always use your gifts wisely and teach us to share them generously. Send the Holy Spirit to work through us, bringing your message of love to those we serve. May our faithful stewardship bear witness to the love of Jesus Christ in our lives. We pray with grateful hearts, in Jesus’ name. Amen. |

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# Closing Prayer Service

# Living Stewardship

## Gather

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding and my entire will, all I have and call my own. You have given all to me. To you, Lord, I return it. Everything is yours; do with it what you will. Give me only your love and your grace; that is enough for me (Prayer of St. Ignatius Loyola).

## Listen

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” (1 Corinthians 12:4-7)

## Respond

Place all of the commitment cards on the prayer table. Play reflective music as this is done.

## Go Forth

Close by reciting the Stewardship Prayer together while lifting the baskets of stewardship commitments so all can see.

Generous God,

thank you for all the gifts you have given me—
my life, my family, my friends,
my time, talents, and treasure.

I know that all I have received is from your hand.

Gracious and loving God, you call us to be
stewards of your abundance,

the caretakers of all you have entrusted to us.

Help us to always use your gifts wisely
and teach us to share them generously.

Send the Holy Spirit to work through us,
bringing your message of love to those we serve.

May our faithful stewardship bear witness
to the love of Jesus Christ in our lives.

We pray with grateful hearts, in Jesus’ name.

Amen.