

Commission on Stewardship

Report to the 114th Annual Council

Mission: To mobilize clergy and lay leaders to develop stewardship resources, enabling parishes to worship joyfully, serve compassionately, and grow spiritually.

The Commission on Stewardship is comprised of Tammy Pallot, Chair (Macon), Mal Underwood (Cartersville), Archdeacon Juan Sandoval (Atlanta), Julia Gable (Decatur), and Bill Monk (Sandy Springs) who serve under the faithful guidance and leadership of Canon John Thompson-Quartey with assistance from Sally Ulrey.

Each member of the Commission serves throughout the diocese and beyond as guest leaders for annual stewardship campaigns, diocesan workshops, vestry and leadership workshops/retreats, and as general stewardship resources for parish leaders.

We were excited to start the year by bringing Rev. Dr. Eric H. F. Law, Executive Director of the Kaleidoscope Institute and renowned author, to the Diocese of Atlanta on February 8, 2020, to lead a Holy Currencies Seminar. Unfortunately, Rev. Dr. Law was unable to travel due to health issues, which resulted in the seminar being led in-person by his capable assistant, Rev. Bill Cruse, with Rev. Dr. Law leading some parts virtually. A total of 65 people from 13 different parishes participated in the Holy Currencies seminar at the Cathedral of St. Philip where they learned this holistic model for stewardship and congregational vitality, moving beyond “time, talent, and treasure” to create missional and sustainable ministries. This model enables church leaders to understand, develop, and utilize five other kinds of currencies besides money that are essential for creating sustainable and missional ministries. These currencies are: Time & Place, Gracious Leadership, Relationship, Truth, and Wellness. These currencies flow and recirculate to form a Cycle of Blessings which empower congregations to strengthen their internal relationships as well as reach out and connect with the diverse populations in their neighborhoods.

After attending the seminar, each parish had the opportunity to enroll a team in Stewardship 365, a six-month program to implement Holy Currencies in their parish. Because this program can be cost prohibitive for many parishes, the Commission on Stewardship supplemented a significant portion of the expense for parishes who chose to enroll. Eight parishes enrolled in Stewardship 365 and were assigned a coach from the Kaleidoscope Institute. The intention was for each parish to have an interactive webinar with their coach once a month where they would be assigned homework to complete with the parish. At the end of the six-month program each parish would have a specific plan for the rest of the year and a plan for the following year. Unfortunately, our plans were somewhat derailed by COVID-19. The parishes continued to faithfully meet with Rev. Dr. Eric Law virtually for 2.5 hours each month, but most of the homework assignments were not feasible in a time without in-person gatherings. Nonetheless, all of the teams who participated cultivated a new perspective on Stewardship and learned new ways of implementing a comprehensive Stewardship program. Despite the challenges of COVID-19, Church of the Ascension has already begun implementing the principles of Holy Currencies with a video series based on each of the Holy Currencies. The videos are available on their website at <https://ascensioncartersville.org/>.

Although the Diocese of Atlanta has been an active member of The Episcopal Network for Stewardship (TENS) for many years, the significant investment in Holy Currencies did not leave enough remaining in the budget to cover the cost of the TENS membership. We were not happy about letting our membership lapse, but we also understand the reality of budgetary restrictions. It was our intention to renew the membership at the beginning of the next fiscal year. It was not long into the pandemic, however, that it became evident it was crucial for parishes to be able to access TENS this year. We are grateful the diocese saw this need and empowered us to renew the diocesan membership, enabling parishes to access to members’ only resources. As always, the TENS login information is available on the diocesan website.

In an attempt to help each other navigate through these unusual times, the Wardens throughout the Diocese of Atlanta began meeting regularly. At the August 7 Wardens meeting, the Commission on Stewardship gave a presentation on Stewardship During COVID-19. Anxiety around Stewardship during a time when we could not gather in-person was expressed by several attending the meeting. Hopefully, the information presented relieved some of the anxiety and provided useful strategies on how to implement a successful Stewardship program. It is worth noting that one beneficial result of the pandemic was churches began thinking about Stewardship much earlier in the year than previous years. We hope that trend will continue in years to come.

In an effort to help assist parishes, the commission created and published “Stewardship During COVID-19: Strategies for the Ministry of Stewardship During a Time Without In-Person Worship”. This is a 23-page comprehensive guide for electronic giving, alternative electronic giving options, social media, annual commitment programs during COVID-19, and a myriad of other resources. This manual is available on the diocesan website.

On September 26, the Commission on Stewardship offered a Stewardship During COVID-19 workshop utilizing Zoom. Over 40 people participated in the workshop which covered multiple strategies and approaches to Stewardship during a time when we are not gathering in-person. A video of the workshop is available on demand on the diocesan website.

We hope the “Stewardship During COVID-19: Strategies for the Ministry of Stewardship During a Time Without In-Person Worship” manual and the Stewardship During COVID-19 Workshop video will be valuable resources to parishes throughout the diocese and beyond. Unfortunately, these resources can be difficult to find on the diocesan website. To find all of the Stewardship resources, including the TENS login information, go to www.episcopalatlanta.org and click “Resources” in the top right corner, then click “Ministry Dev. & Congregational Vitality”, click again on the drop-down option “Ministry Dev. & Congregational Vitality”, scroll down the page, and click on “Stewardship”.

This is a challenging year, but we are up to the challenge! We are grateful for the continual blessing of the Ministry of Stewardship and we are here to help.

Respectfully submitted by
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