

January 10, 2018

A Season (Year?) of Stewardship

Some congregations have moved stewardship season to January, rather than, more traditionally, the Fall. There is some appeal to the approach. For example, the image of the wise men bringing gifts to the Christ Child harmonizes with the gifts of the congregation pledged to enable Christ's ministry in the world.

The idea of stewardship as a "season" is really a fiction, of course. Our role as stewards is not limited to a season on the calendar. Just as we don't have a season for faithfulness or a season for patience, we are privileged to act as stewards year-round.

For 2018, your Presbytery Gathering Planning Team chose a theme of Stewardship for our four Presbytery Gatherings – a yearlong reminder of our practice as stewards, as managers of all that God has given us. We will explore our stewardship of the Good News on March 6. On May 22, we will look at the stewardship of our talents and skills. September 11's Gathering will give us the chance to examine stewardship of the environment, and on November 27, we will practice stewardship of our time.

As we move toward our first Presbytery Gathering on March 6 at Forest Park, I invite you to consider what it means to be stewards of the gospel. Many have contemplated what would have happened if the shepherds had chosen to stay in the fields, rather than visit the manger. If the disciples had decided to stick with fishing, would the Good News have spread?

Like other gifts from God, the news that Christ came into the world to redeem us, that he died on the cross for our sins, and that he promises salvation through the resurrection is a gift that we may not return, exchange, or hide away, as we might an ill-fitting Christmas sweater. Like other gifts from God, we are stewards of that Good News, entrusted to share it broadly, faithfully, and wisely.

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners... Isaiah 61:1 (NRSV). The oppressed in our communities –near and far—are waiting for this word of hope. As ones sent to bring this Good News to the oppressed, we must learn from one another how to be generous stewards of the gospel. Together, we will explore our role as stewards, both the responsibilities and the joys. We will consider what it means to be "oppressed" and in what systems of oppression we might be unwitting accomplices. It will be my pleasure to walk with you on this journey of stewardship. May God grant us wisdom and daring on the way.

Rachel