



let it shine

Stewardship: It All Belongs to God

My mother, Dovetta Wilson, who raised her nine children in Harlem, New York, was once asked why she kept her children in the church. Her response: “Because the church makes my home better, my community better, our nation better and my job easier.”

I was reminded of mom’s words while reading a sermon by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., entitled “*The Things That Are God’s*”, delivered at the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church on 27 October, 1957. In this sermon, Dr. King had this to say about Stewardship and the church:

“The church has a just claim on your active, practical, and financial support, if for no other reason than that your home is better, your community is better, our nation is better, because of the church. With all of its faults—and it certainly has them—the church is the strongest ally in our struggle to discover life at its best. Some of you will say that you support many charities and causes outside the church and I have nothing but the highest of praise for these charities which are doing so much to alleviate human suffering and which I, too, support. But we who are members of the church of Jesus Christ are the lighthouse of the world. We are responsible for one task above all others—to keep the light of the gospel burning bright all else must be secondary; and no amount of spending or righteous philanthropy will excuse us from the faithful fulfillment of that task.”

Our Stewardship and responsibility to the Church of Jesus Christ have not changed or diminished since Dr. King preached this sermon 50 years ago. Yes, the church is often at the center of the tough issues of our time but that’s where the church belongs. In a world challenged by human rights violations, an ever increasing gap between developed and developing countries, the crisis of the environment, religious and ethnic conflicts, war, terrorism, and worldwide poverty the truth is our stewardship and responsibility to the church are even greater today than ever before. Martin’s words—“*With all of its faults—and it certainly has them—the church is the strongest ally in our struggle to discover life at its*

best.”—are as true today as they were 50 years ago; the church is still the best way to transform people and lives.

That’s one of the reasons we come to church, because we believe that the church makes us better. We also know, deep down inside, that anything that can make us, our community and our world better, deserves our full and wholehearted support, and just as important, deserves the best we can give of our financial resources. We should give because we have, and we have because we give, and therefore we are never without.

Matthew 6:21 reminds us that, “*Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*” It cannot be otherwise. Our Stewardship must reflect our hearts and therefore our giving. If we believe with all of our heart, mind and soul that God has called each and every one of us to bring hope and healing to all, if we are committed to making the world a better place, if we expect to bring reconciliation, seek justice and liberation for all of God’s children, then our Stewardship must reflect our hearts and therefore our giving. After all, it all belongs to God.

Reflection:

- Who taught you about stewardship?
- Why do you go to church? What do you find there that you do not find anywhere else?
- How do you keep the light of the gospel burning bright?

Resources:

- *The Papers of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Volume IV: Symbol of the Movement, January 1957 – December 1958.*
- *Ask, Thank, Tell: Improving Stewardship Ministry in Your Congregation*, by Charles R. Lane. Augsburg Fortress, 2006
- *Inspiring Generosity*, from The Stewardship and Church Finances Ministry Team of the United Church of Christ

“Stewardship: It All Belongs To God,” was written by the Rev. Dr. Bernard R. Wilson, Senior Minister of the Norfield Congregational Church in Weston, Connecticut and retired U.S. Navy Chaplain. He previously served as Executive Minister of The Riverside Church in New York City and as Interim Minister of the Briarcliff Congregational Church in Briarcliff Manor, New York.

Our Mission and Ministry

The Connecticut Conference
**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**
125 Sherman Street, Hartford, CT 06105
www.ctucc.org 866.367.2822

