

ANNUAL STEWARDSHIP RENEWAL TIMELINE

The stewardship timeline is categorized in four sections—Preparation, Annual Stewardship Renewal, Annual Stewardship Renewal Follow-up, and the Yearlong Stewardship Effort.

PREPARATION

The most important step in the preparation phase is forming a Stewardship Committee. Once the stewardship committee is formed and educated about stewardship, the first task of the Stewardship Committee is to develop a realistic timeline.

The best way to establish a timeline is for the pastor and Stewardship Committee to decide which weekend should be designated as “Intention Sunday.” Intention Sunday is when parish families will submit their Intention Card. Once this weekend is decided, schedule the four weeks leading up to Intention Sunday for stewardship-related homilies and Lay Witness talks.

SAMPLE TIMELINE:

- WEEK I- Everything In Life Is A Gift brochure and accompanying letter sent the Monday of the week prior to the pulpit kick-off of the stewardship drive.
- WEEK II- The Pastor introduces stewardship, the biblical foundation for stewardship, and announces the beginning of the annual stewardship renewal. The homilist emphasizes the stewardship of prayer and one’s relationship with God. The weekend may be the first time parishioners hear their pastor speak about the Annual Stewardship Renewal. Many parishioners may not be aware of all that stewardship can and will mean in their lives, but they will begin to be aware and understand. Once parishioners begin to understand stewardship more completely that we are not owners, but caretakers, our multiple gifts and are asked, as a fundamental expression of our faith to give back to God. The Gift of Time brochure sent the following Monday with accompanying letter.
- WEEK III- Lay Witness pulpit talks. Everything You Are Is A Gift brochure sent the following Monday with accompanying letter.
- WEEK IV- Pastor Homily on Stewardship, particularly Stewardship of Treasure. The pastor or Finance Chair can offer a brief “state of the parish and communicate that an intention card will be mailed that week. A parish financial report should be included in the weekly bulletin. MINISTRY SUNDAY—a Ministry Fair should be held after all of the Masses. To: God From: You brochure sent the following Monday.
- WEEK V: INTENTION SUNDAY. Every household should have received a letter of Declaration of Intention the previous week. During the offertory, individual families can process forward and present their intention

cards as a gift, by leaving it in a basket on the altar. Or, ushers can pass the collection basket and families can make their offering. The pastor should thank parishioners for the generous sharing of themselves.

ONGOING: Thank you, follow-up, continued communication of stewardship message and our individual responsibilities.

ANNUAL STEWARDSHIP RENEWAL FOLLOW-UP

After Intention Sunday, the stewardship effort moves into the follow-up phase. One of the most critical, and yet one that is often neglected by some parishes, is adequate follow-up. It is important that a follow up effort start with those who have already made commitments.

Once Intention Cards are received, the pastor should mail a thank you letter to parishioners who have responded in some way to the stewardship effort. The Pastor should acknowledge their gifts and thank them for their response. The letter should include a reference to the amount of giving by the parishioner. The amount can be presented on a weekly, monthly and annual basis, depending on what is indicated on their Declaration of Intention. In addition to offering thanks, the letter is also intended to acknowledge the gift and make sure the donated amount is correct.

On the weekend following Intention Sunday, the pastor should again thank the parish families for participating in the Parish Annual Stewardship Renewal and invite those who have not yet made their commitment to prayerfully make a commitment by completing an Intention Card, which can be found in the pews. For those parishioners who do not respond, a follow-up letter from the pastor and a volunteer telephone call would be appropriate.

The sealed Declaration of Intention should be given to the appropriate person (as determined by the pastor). The envelopes are opened and tallied, maintaining confidentiality.

The Ministry Fair Coordinator should work with the Stewardship Committee in noting the number of parishioners who have committed to offering their time and talent to parish ministries. Volunteers should be acknowledged and contacted about volunteering with their chosen ministry(ies). Time and Talent booklets and the Talent Inventory can be left in the church for those who may not have had the opportunity to attend the Ministry Fair or volunteer for a ministry.

The Stewardship Committee should prepare a general summary of the commitments and a preliminary report of the Annual Stewardship Renewal. This information should be communicated to the parish, perhaps by listing it in the bulletin.

ONGOING STEWARDSHIP

The yearlong phase continues as new parishioners join the parish. Because all parishioners should be granted the opportunity to share of their time, talent and treasure, and new parishioners register between annual stewardship renewals, a member of the Stewardship Committee should be a part of the hospitality team explaining stewardship and inviting parishioners to share of their resources. Oftentimes, new parishioners bring a new source of energy and leadership to parish life.

Accountability is an important communication element within the parish family. A monthly accounting—at least-- for financial donations in the bulletin is key to building trust with parishioners.

An annual report should include a parish financial report in broad expense categories along with a short explanation of how the money was spent. Also included should be an activity report of parish ministries (committees, activities, programs and services). Other helpful report information could include the average household contributions to the operation of the parish, average volunteer time committed and the monetary value of this time, planned gifts, and contributors to the Annual Catholic Appeal.

The format of the Annual Stewardship Renewal is suggestive and is easy to change. Annual Stewardship Renewal is designed so that it can be modified to fit the personality, goals and /or limitations of an individual parish. A parish may find the need to conduct a two-week effort rather than a five-week Annual Stewardship Renewal. Or perhaps, parishioners may respond better to the in-pew signing process rather than a direct mail piece sent to their home. Tailor your Annual Stewardship Renewal process to the personality and needs of the parish.