

What's another word for stewardship?

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November 10, 2015

Sometimes I think there should be another word for "stewardship." It's always been the word we use to describe the annual emphasis (usually in the fall) on giving financially, usually to your local congregation. Of course, in seminary, we learned that "stewardship" means something else—it means taking care of something that belongs to Someone Else. But still...

My church had the stewardship emphasis this past month, and we we did emphasize stewardship as taking care of the things that belong to God. We did not emphasize our budget, but we prayed and we talked about giving and generosity, and about how everything we have—including our money—really belongs to God. We talked about giving as a spiritual discipline, like prayer. And we planned a special Sunday—this week—where we would have great music with the organ and piano and guitar and choir, where we would receive our intentions and then celebrate with a special wonderful luncheon together. But still...

I was talking with someone at the church during the week, about how we were planning this great event, with great music and great preaching and great food, and how I hoped a lot of people were able to come. The person turned to me with great honesty and said, "Well, and then there are those who will intentionally stay away."

And even though I felt sad, I understood. Part of it is that no one wants to talk about money, and there's nothing you can do about that. And the word "stewardship" has these connotations about being guilted and shaken down and provoked to "give more" to this institution that pays salaries and has to fix its building. And then we get some money, but it never seems like enough, so a feeling of failure pervades us. But still....

Maybe we need a different word, one that somehow brings to our imagination all of the things we can do together, when we pool the resources that God has entrusted us with. Maybe we need a different word, a word that brings to our imaginations the mission of God and all of the resources that God has given us, so that we can share

it. Maybe we need a different word, a word that makes us excited for the feast that we will share and the songs that we will sing, and the gifts that we will open—gifts that we have given to one another.

Maybe we need another word, but what would it be?

Originally posted at [Faith in Community](#)