

# Stewardship

Not long ago, our neighborhood faced a “crisis.” The threat was not a sudden crime wave, environmental danger, or the loss of some of our neighborhood’s treasured and uncommon diversity. In small ways, we have already faced each of these challenges. This year’s threat was rising association dues!

Our neighborhood is situated on the outer edge of a small town between several major roadways. Our 99 homes are nestled in a neighborhood that was intentionally designed to encourage community. Our subdivision has a single entrance, a neighborhood bus stop, and a large oval-shaped road around which the houses are built. Inside that large oval – beyond the edges of each one of our property lines – lies nearly 15 acres of “common” park areas that we share. In these areas we have a large community sandbox, a playground, a soccer field, and a swimming pool. Private ownership of any of these might be beyond the reach of many of us. Together however, we are able to enjoy and share these things as a community.

Recently, our commonly held areas – the areas that are supposed to bring us together – began to cause us some stress. Maintenance and upkeep costs were continually rising. Shared space is a wonderful idea, but managing and caring for it is complex and expensive. Some called for closing the pool or no longer maintaining our park. Others said it was those things that drew them to the community.

Anxious homeowners knew the dues would rise. Speculation and conversation

was metastasizing. As a board, we knew we needed to be sensitive to the economic challenges among our friends and neighbors; we also knew that the board



needs to protect and maintain the property we share.

On the day I was composing an email for the community I was keenly aware of that tension. As I was writing, there was a knock at my door. When I opened it, I saw four young kids standing there and several more in my driveway. With a simple innocence and a firm determination, they handed me a surprisingly heavy coffee can.

“What is this?” I asked.

“We heard the neighborhood was in trouble so we had some lemonade stands. This is the money. We counted it like five times; we’re pretty sure it’s \$48.88. Bye.” With that they turned, skipped out

*“In giving, a person receives more than they give, and the more is in the proportion to the worth of the thing given.”*

G. Macdonald



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## “NOTABLE QUOTES”

*“In our Christian stewardship we must be very careful lest we let our tithe of little things be a substitute for giving ourselves fully for great Christian causes.”*

*S. I. Stuber*

*“Giving God less than my whole life is robbery.”*

*“When shearing the sheep, never shear from the rear forwards. They do not want the wool pulled over their eyes.”*

*J. E. Herrman*

**G**iving to God a weekly amount from the top of your income makes giving easier and adds the satisfaction of knowing, as you spend the rest of your income, that you have given God the “first fruits” rather than the “leftovers.”



“He doesn’t have much to say, but you have to admire his work!”

## *The Good Steward*

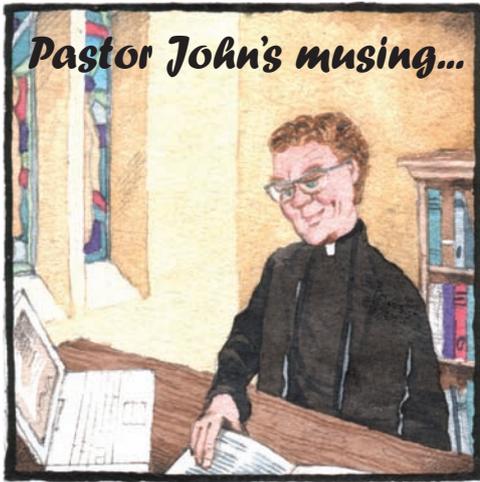
**G**iving our time is often harder than giving our money. When Ron Windorpher, one of our church members, suggested that our congregation start a soup kitchen ministry at noon on Sundays, he knew he couldn’t do it alone. Additional hands would be needed to prepare and serve the food on a day when the local Salvation Army kitchen was closed. The need was clear. Hungry folks needed to eat on Sundays, too. Money alone would not feed empty stomachs. Ron knew he needed both hearts and hands to work together.

So he announced his plan from the pulpit, prepared a sign-up sheet for volunteers, and asked for prayers of support and seed money to help his vision grow. Still, it took awhile for the idea to take hold. Questions and concerns were raised and addressed. After all, this was new territory for our small northern Michigan parish. The new ministry would take a lot of menu planning, preparation, and prayer. And time.

Soon enough, though, volunteer teams appeared. And they have stayed faithful to Ron’s call for over fifteen years. Soup kitchen lunches have ranged from soup to nuts to holiday feasts of turkey, dressing, and yams; from peanut butter and honey sandwiches to baked pineapple and glazed ham. Whether the food is simple or sublime, it fills an empty stomach and warms a lonely heart.

We need each other. What’s more important than giving our time, our most precious commodity, to a hungry person? 





talents and possessions, and how you use these is a choice you make that indicates the depth of your faith.

You can share your time by serving in the activities of your church, as a leader or teacher, and by faithful attendance, recreational and social activities.

You can share your talents and abilities by answering the call for workers in any task, from painting the woodwork to calling on people.

Once there was a man who went to his Pastor and said, "Give me the job that nobody else wants to do." What a marvelous investment of his time and ability.

You can acknowledge the priority of God's work by giving it first place in the apportionment of your income.

So then, part of being a good church member is sharing yourself and what you have with God and your fellow human beings ... your time, your talent, and your possessions. 

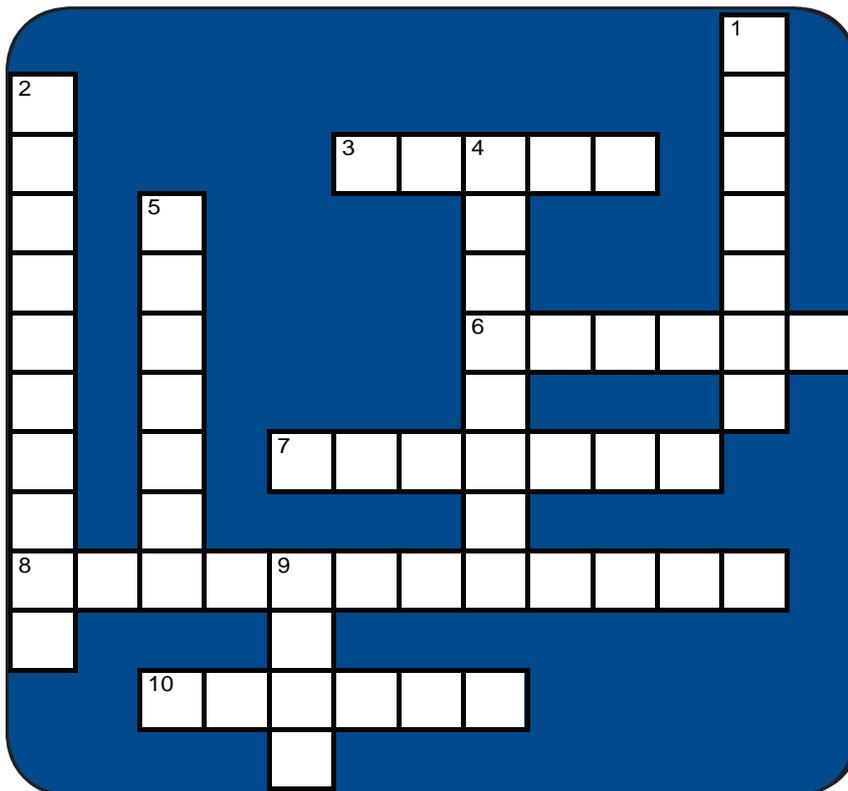
*Christian stewards do not dedicate their time, talent and treasure that they may become God's, but because they are God's.*

**T**he great commandment given by Jesus was to love. To fulfill this, Christians worship and share.

Let's talk about ... SHARING.

Sharing is both serving and giving. It's part of our "stewardship." We believe that it is the privilege of Christians to dedicate what they have and what they are to God. We commonly speak of time,

## Stewardship Word Scramble



Clue	Answer
<b>Across</b>	
3. Easier to give than time.	eynmo
6. An act of stewardship.	invigig
7. Not returning tithes and offerings (Malachi 3:8).	rorbbye
8. Good way for people to face challenges.	hsettrgsneeo
10. Supports the church.	bmrnee
<b>Down</b>	
1. An act of sharing.	nvirges
2. An attribute of a good steward.	yneregijos
4. Anyone in need of our help.	rheignob
5. Both serving and giving.	ginsarh
9. A gift from God, measured in hours.	imte

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## Not long ago....

of my garage and went back to playing. I thanked them and quickly shut the door because of my tears. I wondered, what kinds of things did these kids overhear? What was the “trouble” they sensed?

What impressed me was that these kids sensed a challenge and decided to do something about it. The “trouble” or tension they sensed did not make them complain or worry, but they decided to work together with ingenuity and imagination to solve the issue. For some of us, anxiety and tension can close us down, shut us down, and cause us to protect ourselves. Instead of handling themselves that way, the kids faced a challenge with togetherness and generosity.

I returned to my computer inspired and, with coffee can in hand I narrated the story to my neighbors. I wrote that the kids inspired me and that I would match their gift to the neighborhood. I encouraged my neighbors to join me. There were several who did. More importantly, when the neighborhood heard the story, the content and tone of our conversations changed. We moved from talking about money, uncertainty and scarcity to talking about what the kids did.

When matching funds were combined with others marked for improvements, we refilled the sandbox, replaced worn soccer nets, and put up a new community basketball hoop. We wanted the kids to know that their simple gift made a difference in the neighborhood. For many of us, the difference was looking at problem-solving through the lens of community and creativity - not just money. We learned that togetherness, imagination, and generosity are fine antidotes for what ails us. 

M. Nelesen



## The Best Puzzle

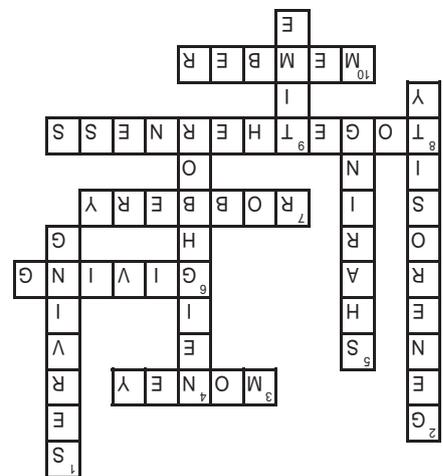
**A**lmost everyone is familiar with how jigsaw puzzles work. You form a picture by assembling pieces that are cut so that they only fit together in one way.

However, there’s another type of puzzle, one in which all the pieces are the same shape, usually square. These pieces can fit together in an almost unlimited number of ways. It’s necessary to focus on what the entire picture is to finish the puzzle.

In a way, stewardship of treasure is like the second type of puzzle. There are many different places we can put it. Money will “fit” anywhere. However, the right picture can only be formed if we put our funds where God wants them to be.

What does this mean for Christians?

For most of us, it means budgeting carefully. Thinking before buying impulsively. Most of all, it means trying to improve the lives of others and our own by giving back to God more of what God so graciously provides us.



**Puzzle Solution**

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