



About Becoming Stewards ...Of Mission and Growth

(Week 3 of a 6 part series)

Who are we? Whose are we? Why are we here? And what are we called to be and to do? These are questions about each of us individually, but they can also be about why are "we" the New Light community here, on earth, in Maryland, and yes even in the Hagerstown community. These questions get to the heart of our human identity.

When asked why are you here, some will respond with "God put me here to accomplish something". This can be summed up by the word mission. Although Marian Webster has many definitions for mission the primary one is: 'a task or job that someone is given to do'. God also has a mission. God sets out to make all things new. It is God's mission to transform persons, to redeem us and restore us to joyful and useful participation in God's work. It is God's mission to transform the church as well, to redeem and restore our common life so that we might live as stewards of God's abundant gifts, and invite others into that stewardship - for the sake of the world that God loves.

Mission, in the way I understand it, is not so much about what the church does, whether overseas or within our neighborhood, but the church's understanding of **who it is and what it is called to be**. The term mission must be understood as -what is being done here is what we care about and focus upon in our life. We are the church by what our mission is and how we carry it out in what we call our ministries. **Ministry flows from the church's understanding of mission or its reason for being.**

Stewardship is a response to the mission of God.. When people, especially Christians are asked about why they are faithful stewards of God resources the most common response is that they believe in the mission of God. You see people want to help make **a difference in the world with their giving.**

Stewardship is lived out by what some churches call the central faith practices of the marks of mission. Various denominations use approximately 5, one tradition states these as;

- live among God's faithful people;
- hear the Word of God and share in the Lord's Supper;
- proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed;
- serve all people following the example of Jesus; and,
- strive for justice and peace in all the earth.

Another states them as:

To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
To teach, baptize and nurture new believers
To respond to human need by loving service
To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation
To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth

Stewardship can also be defined as: "What I do, with all that I have, after I say, "I believe." And "Using the gifts God has given us, to do the work God is calling us to do."

We are Christian stewards when we are faithful to the mission of the church. Stewardship, therefore is attached to the very purpose or reason for being the church. New Lights identity is not so much about what we do (though it is expressed in what we do) as about who we are. It is an expression of our very center--of our very identity. Our gifts to and through the church emerge from who we are. Following this line of thinking, discipleship and stewardship go together. Real stewardship leads to faithful discipleship. And faithful discipleship requires the refinement of the various gifts God has placed within this community.

Responsible Christian stewardship which focuses upon God's mission and the growth of God's message to the world is lived out through our understanding of Christ Jesus, his call of us to become disciples of his mission. As we live into this understanding how could the church not grow? What would you say is your personal mission in this world?, and then what would you say is the mission of New Light MCC here in 2014 and into the future?

Sherry