

Trinity Stewardship Temple Talk
David McMullen
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When I was asked to do this Temple Talk as a member of our Trinity Stewardship Cluster, my first thought was, "what does stewardship mean to me"?

Of course, this is a difficult question, as it's very personal for each of us. To me, stewardship means that everything I own doesn't truly belong to me (right now you maybe thinking "he's right- it seems like everything I own really belongs to the bank!"). But really, to me, everything I own actually *belongs* to The Lord, and He has entrusted these things to me, to be a good *steward of the gifts he has made available to me*.

As Christians, and as Lutherans, we put our trust in the Lord And the Lord also trusts us to do the right thing To me, we should return the trust that the Lord has in us by being good stewards of the gifts he has showered each and every one of us with- our lives, our time, our talents, and our resources. Being good stewards of God's gifts is the appropriate *spiritual response* to having been so richly blessed by them.

This time of Lenten preparation, and Consecration Sunday coming up next week at Trinity, seems like a good time to reflect and pray on what the Lord is asking us to do with the various gifts he has given us to use.

I had an experience a few years ago regarding prayer that I'd like to share. I was contemplating- and praying- about whether to make a major life-change- that being leaving the business field that I had made a 23 year long career in, and starting a career in the *not-for-profit service* field with the Niagara Lutheran Health System.

At the same time, early in 2005, we had the opportunity here at Trinity to experience a prayer labyrinth. If you're not familiar with a prayer labyrinth, it was like a very large sheet, with a maze pattern on it, that was spread over the floor one evening in the fellowship hall. The idea was to walk through the maze pattern, following each turn and dead end, while you prayed about a concern, or for guidance, or the like.

Pastor Ruth Snyder made the point that what made the prayer labyrinth a unique experience was that it encouraged you to take the time not only to pray, but to listen for the Lord's *answers* to your prayers as you made your way through maze. And this made me realize that while I had been praying- maybe thousands of prayers over the years- I hadn't really stopped to *listen* for God's answers to my prayers.

So the prayer labyrinth made me consciously focus for the first time on listening to what God was telling me through my prayer. Before this, my prayers were like I had been talking to God on the telephone, saying to him, "what do you think,?" but then hanging up the receiver before he had a chance to answer me.

As I focused on listening for God's answers, they came to me, stronger and clearer than ever before in my life, to the point that it was amazing- and *truly life-changing for me*. I felt that I was being called in a new direction, and I changed careers, and this change has been a great blessing in my life.

We all have been given bountiful gifts from God, but we may not be aware of all of these gifts, and we may not be *focused* on how we can be wise stewards of our time, talents, and financial resources. Stewardship is not something we should think about only once a year on Consecration Sunday. There are *so many* stewardship opportunities here, all year long- service on council and committees, assisting with worship, teaching, property, music- and yes, financial support as well.

On behalf of the Stewardship Cluster here at Trinity, I'd like to encourage you to pray about how you might best use the varied gifts the Lord has entrusted to you. But moreso than just pray, *stop and listen* for God's answers