

What comes to mind when someone says the word “stewardship”? If you are like most people, you probably think of money. That is part of it, but stewardship is so much more. This morning, we would like to discuss stewardship and how all of us are stewards of our church.

The definition of stewardship is the job of supervising or taking care of something; the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one’s care. When the word first appeared in the English language it functioned as a job description such as a “steward of a household”. Nowadays we hear of stewardship of the environment or family business or church.

To start off, Nancy and Sue would like to share their own personal stories of how stewardship of our church brought them here and why they stayed.

Thank you Nancy and Sue!

As the New Year began, Dave asked if any of us had made resolutions. He went on to explain that our resolutions are related to our vision of the year ahead. I hadn’t thought of resolutions that way before. He then asked about our resolution or our vision, for our church, and that is what brings me here today. What is our purpose, why are we here? Who are we? Where are we going and how do we get there? Are we satisfied with the way things are or do we want something more from our church? If we want something more, what do we want?

We have a wonderful congregation or perhaps I should say – church family. People are friendly, helpful, kind and willing to volunteer their time and talents in any way they can. We care for our church and each other. Unfortunately, our congregation is shrinking instead of growing. If we want to sustain our church family into the future, we need to increase the size of our family. How do we invite people to join us? How do we “steward” the people of our community and draw them in? What do we have to offer them? In our secular society,

many people don't have any idea of what church is or why they would want to come. If we can articulate what our church is, what it means to us and the many benefits of attendance then we can explain it to others and inspire them to join us.

Sadly, it is estimated that across Canada, 2 churches are closing per week. Some churches are amalgamating with churches in neighbouring towns or areas, some are cutting back on ministry personnel and worshipping fewer Sundays per month, some are sharing their church buildings with other denominations or with businesses. This is not because they have done anything wrong or failed to invite new people or try new things.

Crossfield United has been very fortunate to have had the town as a tenant for several years. I know that we have had to make sacrifices to accommodate that arrangement but the rental income has enabled us to keep operating. The funds from the sale of the manse have also been a major contributor to our financial bottom line. In 2024, monies from the town and manse fund covered 47% of our annual expenses. We know that one day the town office will move to their own building and the manse funds will run out. We realize that our small congregation gives all it can – in time, talents and money so we need to grow our congregation to sustain our church.

Crossfield's population is growing 4 to 5 % per year and has nearly grown 25% in the last 5 years. This provides us with an amazing opportunity to reach out and welcome new members to the congregation. But how do we do this?

Over the past 2 years the stewardship committee has worked to make our church more visible with hope that if people realize we are here, they will come. Despite our best efforts, we have had little success.

We will be taking some time at the annual meeting on Feb 9 to discuss stewardship and our vision for the future and we want your input. We'd like you to give some thought to how we can grow and maintain our church and bring your ideas to the meeting. We know that many hands make light work so we are sure that many ideas will make a resourceful and resilient church

family. We are excited to hear your thoughts. We are handing out a list of questions that we hope will be of assistance in forming your ideas and vision for the church. This is not an exhaustive list and all ideas and comments are welcome. We hope to hear from everyone, so should you not be able to attend the annual meeting, please feel free to put forth your ideas by putting them down on paper and giving them to one of the members of the stewardship committee, Sue, Debra, Nancy, Joyce or Joanne, or leaving it in the offering plate.