

## Becoming Stewards: The 4 “B’s” of [Non]Stewardship

Maybe because the appeals from various charities start arriving around this time, churches have emphasized stewardship in November. But there has to be more to it than that--we are the church aren't we? Does anything come before stewardship? Is there something more than fundraising behind stewardship? What lurks below stewardship? Do we ever move beyond stewardship? The calendars of the church and secular society converge and collide in November: Hallowe'en and All Saints, Remembrance Day and the end of Pentecost, Black Friday and Christ the King, the start of Christmas Shopping and the beginning of Advent. Over the next four weeks this column is dedicated to engaging the theme of stewardship at these intersections. With each “b” there is reference to Christ, for “yes, we are the church together!”

### Before Stewardship...

Let's begin before the beginning, before there ever was anything to manage, manipulate, or market—and let us always remain there, in the beginning when we are not stewards, not supporters, we are nothing but who we are and God is everything, God is everywhere, God is always with us and we are at peace in the mystery of being, creatures in creation, related to everyone and everything, brothers and sisters of all that is by the love of the Creator God. As **Psalm 24** for All Saints Sunday says this year, **“The earth is the Lord's, and all that is in it...”**

To say this relationship in and with creation is “before stewardship” seems to make the beginning something past, something “back then....” But beginnings are now! The interconnectedness of being in relationship with all creation is now, and we are realizing it lies before us in the urgency of survival as creatures with all other creatures. Not even Hallowe'en fun escapes the urgent plea from Mother Earth: remember your jack-o-lantern is still a pumpkin and keep it out of the landfill by turning it into soup or pie!

Before stewardship is creation, the “now” of beginning in grace and love for all that is and all that will be. The first “B” of becoming stewards is “Before.” Before we can become stewards, we must become non-stewards: not managers but relatives of the creatures, the trees, the waters, the air, the soil, all creation, individually and together. Before stewardship is Christ: before we can become stewards we are invited in Christ to become non-stewards, relatives of the one whose Incarnation makes all creation holy, whose blood shed in the crucifixion makes all creation sacred, whose resurrection and ascension fill all creation with His presence, and whose return in glory makes all creation new. Before us all opens a path of sanctification that begins with valuing our relationship with all creation through faith in Christ. **“And the one who is seated on the throne said, ‘See, I am making all things new!’” (Rev. 21”5).** Let us pray:

**Merciful Creator**, your hand is open wide to satisfy the needs of every living creature. Make us always thankful for your loving providence. Help us remember that one day we must give an account, and so be faithful stewards of your good gifts, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**