

## Matthew 25 and Stewardship

### Making Stewardship Make Sense for Children

Children can learn about stewardship and participate by sharing their gifts too. One way to do that is by using the lens of the [Matthew 25 Movement](#) within the PCUSA. The Matthew 25 invitation focuses on Matthew 25: 31-46, the parable of the sheep and goats in which Jesus makes clear, that what we do matters to God and how we treat others is important to God. The Matthew 25 Movement focus areas include Building Congregational Vitality, Dismantling Structural Racism, and Eradicating Systemic Poverty as well as several intersecting priorities like addressing Climate Change. As we look at the Matthew 25 scripture itself, Jesus is calling us to perform ordinary acts of compassion in daily life and those are acts of stewardship. Let's explore some ways to make these connections with children.

#### **Identify the program, project, or initiative**

Stewardship can be a difficult word. It's more than caretaking. It is showing gratitude to God through serving others and following the example of Jesus. The Matthew 25 scripture, particularly verses 35 and 36, give us a concrete example of *what* to do and *why*. We feed the hungry, tend the sick, visit those in prison, welcome those who are left out. We do this because "whatever you do to the least of them, you do for me" Jesus' parable says. This provides an understanding of serving others as an act of stewardship through serving others.

Take time to wonder what kind of project or opportunity could be brainstormed to help children make these connections?

#### **Recognize the resources and steps necessary**

Look for ways to help children match the initiatives and programs the church offers to the needs of the community. Consider what is concrete, foundational, and accessible without deep context requiring inference. Jesus gives concrete examples: I was naked and you clothed me. I was hungry and you gave me something to eat. This makes the hospitality of Matthew 25 readily accessible for children.

For example,

"I was hungry and you gave me food." I wonder how our church can help people who are hungry? The answer might be to collect food for the food pantry.

"I was sick and you took care of me." I wonder how our church can help people who don't know where they will sleep tonight? The answer might be to help make shelters more welcoming with blankets, welcome cards, or a hygiene bag.

#### **One Idea: Learning together about Stewardship through a Matthew 25 lens**

**Objective:** Children and their parents or caregivers will use a Matthew 25 Mission Activity booklet to learn about how they can be partners in caring for and serving others in the name of Jesus.

**Who:** Families will learn together ways to show gratitude to God through sharing their time and service.

Children will celebrate that they can partner with Jesus to take care of God's people.

Participants will remember that stewardship is a "yes and." Yes, it is about giving money to support the work of the church, and it is the active participation in the life of the church that confesses our gratitude.

**Suggested ways to go about it:** Make a list of the outreach, ministry, or service opportunities at your church. Challenge the leadership to identify ways that children and their families can lead or participate in a meaningful way with each of those ministry opportunities.

Adapt the sample Matthew 25 Stewardship Mission Activity booklet to create a take home resource for your families. Or design your own. (See sample booklet [here](#).)

Create an entry for the activity booklet that illustrates the service or mission provided by those on your list.

Challenge children to name how this program or opportunity serves God's people. Consider using words from the Matthew 25 scripture.

Share the booklet with families and ask parents to come along side children as they read through it and fill it in. You could also include a set of stickers with contact information for the various opportunities so that families know how they can follow through.

Make sure to follow up with families about opportunities to serve and work with the leaders of the identified programs to find ways to encourage and welcome children and family participation.

**Bonus Idea:** Plan a Matthew 25 Mission Fair and provide a way for children learn about each program do a "hands on" example of the work that each program does. Or if your congregation does an all-church Mission Fair make sure that you plan for concrete ways for the children to engage in learning too. This could be a scavenger hunt with a question the children have answered at each table about the work of that organization or program. Their paper could also be stamped. ([Here](#) is a sample activity sheet.)

**Bonus Idea:** Add an opportunity to sing. One song choice could be, "What does the Lord require of you/us?" PCUSA Hymnal Glory to God #70 By Jim Strathdee

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