

advancing stewardship

estate planning and other news



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Living Responsibly in God's World

The Vision and Mission of CSS

Henry Eygenraam

In May 2001, Christian Stewardship Services celebrated 25 years of service to the reformed Christian community with events held at Redeemer University College.

Anniversary celebrations like this are often opportunities to reflect, and celebrate the past. We did indeed do that – with thanks to God for blessing our work! Our anniversary was also a time when we looked to the future with excitement, as a new Strategic plan was submitted to the membership of CSS at its Annual Meeting.

As we approached the 25th anniversary 'milestone', the Board of CSS felt it was time to look toward the future and develop a New Strategic Plan. A committee was created to embark on this task and a year-long planning exercise ensued.

The process involved extensive surveys, questionnaires and personal interviews with people representing sponsors and clients of CSS, industry professionals, sister organizations, as well as potential sponsors and clients. The committee was professionally assisted by Ralph Kikkert of *Strive!*. With his expert facilitation skills, Ralph helped us listen to our community and forced us to ask and answer difficult questions. It was a very involved but exciting process, full of affirmations, challenges and even a few surprises.

After listening to the feedback, we determined that the development of a vision and mission statement for CSS was foundational to the creation of a plan. The vision statement represents in a few words, the motivation behind what CSS strives to promote - or – "why we do what we do". The mission statement puts into practical terms the specific things we will do as a response to God's broad mandate. Allow me to share them with you.

Our Vision:

Living Responsibly in God's World

This statement reflects the reality that God is the owner of all things. As owner, God has all of the rights. We, as God's stewards, have responsibilities. A **steward** is someone **entrusted** with another's property. Stewards are **charged with the responsibility** of managing it in **the owners' best interest**. CSS and its stakeholders encourage people, not only to believe that they have responsibilities in God's world but also to carry them out in their daily lives.

Our Mission:

Christian Stewardship Services, together with its supporting Christian organizations, promotes Biblical stewardship through planned giving and education.



Through practical financial counselling and education, CSS works with and on behalf of Christian organizations to encourage people to be responsible stewards, thereby helping individuals and these Christian organizations advance the Kingdom of God.

We at CSS now enthusiastically set about working with our new strategic plan. The plan contains main goal areas relating to **effective partnering, service delivery capabilities, communication and financial responsibility**. This is then worked out in numerous strategies for each area that we believe the Lord is challenging us to implement.

As we engage ourselves in this task we expect to enable many individuals to respond to God's call for responsible stewards in whatever place and role He has given them.

Is an RESP for You?

Willard VanderPloeg

A Registered Education Savings Plan (RESP) is a savings vehicle used by parents to save for their children's post secondary education. More precisely, it is a contract between an individual (the subscriber) and an organization (the promoter). The subscriber makes contributions that accumulate tax-free earnings. The promoter uses the funds to make educational assistance payments to one or more beneficiaries. RESPs are registered with Canada Customs and Revenue.



Types of Plans;

Non-family: These plans can only have one beneficiary and there are no restrictions on who qualifies to be one. The subscriber is free to decide when and how much will be contributed. The subscriber can also stop contributions at any time.

Family: These plans can have one or more beneficiaries. However, each must be related by blood or adoption to subscribers under the plan, or have been related to a deceased original subscriber. Subscribers are free to decide when and how much to contribute.

Group: These plans are usually offered by non-taxable entities like foundations and non-profits. They are administered on an age group concept, meaning all plans for 9-year-olds for example, are administered together.

How they work;

Subscribers (or other depositors, like grandparents) may make annual contributions to a maximum of \$4,000 per beneficiary under the plan to a maximum lifetime limit of \$42,000. Funds invested grow tax free until the child is ready for post secondary education. When the student begins to use the RESP for education, the investment becomes taxable. However because the student typically

has little other income, he or she effectively pays almost no tax on RESP income. Contributions to RESPs are not tax deductible for subscribers or others.

If the beneficiary does not attend an approved post secondary institution, several alternatives exist – depending on the promoter and specific plans.

- With Family plans, the funds can be assigned to a new beneficiary - another sibling.
- The child can withdraw the funds, subject to 20% withholding tax and withdrawal penalties.
- The subscriber may roll the funds it into his/her RRSP – provided they have unused contribution room.

Government Assistance!

The Federal Government now “tops up” RESP contributions! The Canadian Education Savings Grant (CSEG) is 20% of the first \$2,000 contributed per beneficiary under 18 years of age. Grant contribution room can be carried forward to future years if less than \$2,000 is contributed. Government contributions to an RESP through Education Savings Grants may only be withdrawn for educational purposes.

According to the Human Resources Development Canada, there are 49 licenced “promoters” of RESPs in Canada – ranging from for profit corporations to non-profits and charities. Some are longstanding organizations specializing in RESP products, while others entered the market with the introduction of the SCEG in 1998. Their plans all have unique features and benefits as well as drawbacks.

Is an RESP a good option for saving for your children's (or grandchildren's) education? That depends. All RESP's are sold by prospectus – a document needing careful review before signing on the dotted line. I also recommend that everyone seek independant financial advice before making a decision. The staff at CSS will be pleased to help you examine the alternatives. See the box below for important RESP plan considerations.

RESP Plan Considerations

- Is the company selling the product a for-profit, non-profit or charity?
- Is the company an RESP specialist, or do they offer many products?
- Is the company willing to share financial statements for the fund, showing details about fees, penalties and distributions made?
- What kind of investments does the fund hold? What kind of security do these offer?
- What is the expected return on investment? Are reported earnings net or gross of fees?
- What fees can I expect to pay? Enrollment fees, deposit fees, management expenses, front/back loads, etc.
- What options do I have when withdrawing from the fund or collapsing it? What are the penalties for collapse?
- What is involved in withdrawing funds? Do I need receipts or proof of admission?

Why Stewardship Education?

Rick DeGraaf

That question has often been directed to me these past few months as I make the transition from CRWRC to a new position with Christian Stewardship Services. The short answer is more joy for God's people as they engage more of their resources into Kingdom ministry!

There is a lot of need for ministry! As Christians, we are challenged to address the tremendous need for Christian ministries that address poverty, overpopulation, disasters, hate and the grip of religions that deny the Good News of salvation through Jesus Christ. The need is evident both in our own communities and around the world. My personal experience, as a CRWRC missionary to Bangladesh and India, taught me how difficult it is to share the "Good News" in a truly appropriate, meaningful and wholistic way. The hopelessness of the people that we served there contrasted with our tendency to rely more on our own initiative and hard work, than on God's blessing.

In moments of deepest personal despair – I had doubts that left me wondering if we really could make a difference in the face of desperate poverty and the grip of Islam. It seemed like our work was only a 'small drop' in a big 'bucket of need'! It was in one of those

moments, that God opened my eyes to understand the story of Jesus' "Feeding of the Five Thousand" in a new and encouraging way.

Both Matthew and Luke give an account of this story (Matt. 14: 12-21 & Luke 9:10-17). It was when Jesus said to his disciples: "You give them something to eat" that I really connected. I imagined myself standing there in front of all those people – checking my pockets for money – and very quickly coming to the conclusion: **Impossible!** And therefore, just as it was impossible for the disciples to feed all those 5,000 people on their own, so it is today for the Christian community to respond to all the need for ministry – around the world. When we sometimes despair of the task at hand, it is important for us to be reminded that – Jesus expects us to bring only what we have - "*our five loaves and two fishes*" – to HIM. **We can make a difference where we are!** It is He who is able to help us to do immeasurably more than we could ever hope or imagine. That simple 'drop' is God's 'leverage' or 'stretch'.

Our role, then, is to be faithful and obedient! I firmly believe and have experienced in my ministry that we can stretch way beyond ourselves – if we commit all that we have to God first – like the *five loaves and two fishes*. We include our Time, our Talents (abilities/skills), our Treasures (yes our money) and the Trees (environment) that God allows us to care for and utilize. With His blessing – watch out – we are likely to have leftovers!

It is God who has placed us where we are and gives us what we need as His Stewards. Stewards are trusted servants (not slaves) – trusted with the Master's business. As Christians we have an awesome task – lives filled with so much purpose. God is ready to entrust us with more resources – if we are faithful (Malachi 3:10). Our task or purpose as God's entrusted Stewards embraces our immediate families, our neighbours, our fellow church family, our community and is as big as the world/universe. There is no place for complacency when you are a 'Kingdom steward'.

Why stewardship? Because each of us need to make a choice: we can have the joy of being busily engaged in God's Kingdom enterprise or we can simply live for ourselves alone. Through our Stewardship Education program we aim to equip leaders to champion faithful management of God-given resources in their congregations – so that there may be more Kingdom effort and more joy! If you or your church would like to get a Stewardship initiative going – drop us a line – we want to help!

advancing stewardship

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Need a Speaker for Your Event?

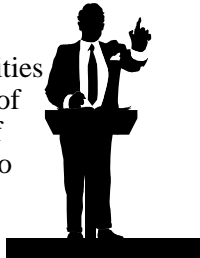
Christian Stewardship Services staff participate in many public meetings each year, across Canada. Speaking engagements are often arranged by church or school groups, pre-marriage counselors, Bible study groups, etc.

CSS seminars and presentations attempt to make topics understandable to all in attendance and bring Christian perspective and consideration to increasingly complex issues. Time is always planned for audience questions and comments.

The topic is often one of the following:

- An Introduction to CSS
- Wills and Estate Planning
- Special Ways to Give to Charity
- Financial/Tax Planning
- Investments and Alternatives for Retirement

CSS Staff also do presentations for Christian Schools and Sponsoring Charities which focus on how to begin programs of special giving and utilize the services of CSS. Introductory presentations are also made to potential sponsoring charities and schools.



If your organization has an annual meeting or other function planned for later this fall - or even in the new year, Christian Stewardship Services would be pleased to participate. Got an idea for a special topic? We'd be very pleased to discuss your needs with you!

For more information on our public presentations, or to reserve a date, contact the CSS office or mail or fax the request form below.

Visit CSS on the web!
www.cssservices.ca

What if Everybody Did?

Moneywise Meditation

John H. Rudy

What kind of church would it be if every member were a faithful steward of all his or her resources? If everybody avoided an extravagant lifestyle? If every Christian brother and sister covenanted with each other to give and receive counsel on personal money matters? If everybody gave generously from their incomes? If everybody included the work of the Lord in their Wills?

I know, this is a little too idealistic. It would be like heaven. But, right here on earth, we could be a little more faithful. A little more frugal. A little more generous.

God does not expect perfection. But he does call us to greater faithfulness. Right here where we are. Right in the mainstream of the economic order. With money.

Moneywise Meditations by John H. Rudy is a collection of meditations on Christian stewardship. A limited number of copies are available for purchase from CSS. The price for this 160 page book is a modest \$7.50 with mail shipping included. Contact the CSS office to order your copy.

Request for Information:

mail or fax to:

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