



SPARK
HOUSE
IN THE
SUMMER

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PLANNING GOOD STEWARDS TOGETHER	4
<i>Event 1</i> SUMMER KICKOFF	9
<i>Event 2</i> STORIES OF STEWARDSHIP	17
<i>Event 3</i> BIBLICAL GOOD STEWARDS	29
<i>Event 4</i> HOLY SPIRIT OF STEWARDSHIP	42
<i>Event 5</i> STEWARDS OF GRACE	52
<i>Event 6</i> STEWARDS OF THE LOVE OF GOD	59
<i>Event 7</i> FOOD TO SHARE	66
<i>Event 8</i> STEWARDS OF THE BODY OF CHRIST	78
<i>Event 9</i> FAITH, FELLOWSHIP, AND FUN	94
<i>Event 10</i> GOD'S WORLD, OUR WORLD	118
<i>Event 11</i> GOOD STEWARDS CELEBRATE	130
<i>Event 12</i> SUMMER SENDOFF	138



SUMMER KICKOFF

GET READY

Today's Theme

God calls each of us to be a steward in our life of faith.

Today's Goal

Introduce participants to the summer theme and the word *steward* while previewing the themes of upcoming events.



SUPPLIES

- Music soundtrack and player
- Name tags
- Permanent markers
- Watering can
- Thermometer
- Pet food dish
- Reusable water bottle
- Smartphone
- Money or credit card
- Three Questions from page 16
- Bible
- Electric fan
- Sandals
- Globe
- Table
- Small, hardy houseplant (such as philodendron or spider plant)
- Pot (ceramic or plastic, 8–12 inches in diameter)
- Soil
- Watering can with water
- Trowel
- Sprout icon from page 8
- Laminator or clear, self-adhesive paper
- Wooden chopstick
- Glue or tape

PREPARATION

1. Read through the entire event, gather the needed supplies, and set up gathering spaces with accessible seating for all.
2. Starting with this kickoff event, ask someone to take pictures during each event. Plan to post them on social media and display them during your end-of-summer event. Making pictures public may require media releases; ask people to sign these ahead of time, and make note of who, if anyone, does not want to be photographed.

GATHERING TOGETHER

SUPPLIES

- Music soundtrack and player
- Name tags
- Permanent markers
- Watering can
- Thermometer
- Pet food dish
- Reusable water bottle
- Smartphone
- Money or credit card
- Three Questions from page 16

PREPARATION

1. Prepare the music player with the soundtrack songs.
2. Set up a welcome table with name tags, markers, music player, and other supplies.
3. Set up tables and chairs for groups of five or six people.
4. Decide how you will divide people into groups as they arrive. Be sure that each table includes a mix of ages. Children under age 5 can sit with their parents or caregivers, but older kids should sit with people who are not in their family.
5. Print and cut apart copies of the Three Questions, and place one at each table.

WELCOME ACTIVITY

Play the music soundtrack as you welcome participants and invite them to make a name tag. Distribute the summer schedule, and collect any needed registration information.

Invite participants to form groups of five or six. Ideally, each group should include members who don't know each other well. When all have gathered at a table, each person can answer the questions on the Three Questions page.

- What do you like about the age you are?
- What is something you are looking forward to this summer?
- What is something you take care of in your family, like a pet, a toy, or a device?

GROUP GATHERING

Once everyone has gathered and answered at least some of the questions, begin your large group time together. Follow this script and adapt for your group. **Thank you for coming to this kickoff event for Good Stewards Together. To start our time, you answered some questions so the others at your table could learn about you. During the next several weeks, we will be learning more about the words steward and stewardship and how God calls us to take care of our world and each other.** Give specific details about where and when you will meet throughout the summer. Establish expectations for your group's time together so everyone is clear about how your group will be in community. If possible, create a covenant together and post it each time you meet.

Stewardship takes many forms. Hold up a watering can. **A watering can helps take care of plants. Plants need water to grow, and a watering can helps me water plants so they stay healthy.**

Hold up a thermometer. **When somebody isn't feeling well, a thermometer is a good way to check their temperature. A thermometer helps take care of someone when they're sick.**

Hold up a pet food dish. **Pets, like cats and dogs, need food to grow and stay healthy. A pet food dish helps feed and take care of pets.**

Hold up a reusable water bottle. **Water bottles help us stay hydrated. A reusable water bottle means we don't have to use plastic water bottles or cups. This reduces waste and helps take care of our world.**

Hold up a smartphone. **A phone is a good way to reach out to people and check in on family and friends. Staying in touch via text messages, email, talking on the phone, or even social media is a great way to take care of people.**

Hold up cash or a credit card. **Giving money to the church or another organization that serves people helps care for people in need.**

Over the next several weeks, we're going to learn all about how we are called to use what we have to be good stewards.

OPENING PRAYER

Invite everyone to stand as they are able for this prayer.

Dear God, we thank you for giving us this time to be together, to grow in faith, and to learn how each of us is a steward of what you have given us. Amen.

EXPLORING THE THEME

SUPPLIES

- Bible
- Electric fan
- Sandals
- Globe
- Table

PREPARATION

1. Set your props close to a table you'll stand behind.

ACTIVITY: SUMMER GOOD STEWARDS

Introduce participants to the five themes of these summer events. (If your congregation is planning events for fewer than all five units, adjust accordingly.) Introduce each topic—Bible, Spirit, Disciple, Church, and World—through the use of simple props.

This summer we will be exploring some different ways we are all stewards of what God has given us. *Stewardship* is a word we use to describe a certain attitude and set of behaviors that are part of discipleship.

A steward is anyone who:

- takes care of something that belongs to someone else.
- cares for a household, property, land, finances, or people.
- is in charge of a household, including the people who live and work there.

INTRODUCING THE SUMMER EVENTS ABOUT THE BIBLE

Hold up a Bible. **There are a lot of books in the Bible, and those books tell a lot of stories, and those stories are filled with characters who are doing their best to follow God. The Bible tells us stories to help us learn how to be good stewards. During the two events focused on the Bible, we'll discover how people in Bible times lived as good stewards and what the Bible tells us about stewardship today.**

INTRODUCING THE SUMMER EVENTS ABOUT SPIRIT

Turn on a strong fan and point it at the group. **Raise your hand if you can feel the wind from the fan. Move the fan back and forth until everyone has a chance to raise their hand. Then turn off the fan. We can't see wind, but we can feel it. God's Spirit is the same way. We can't see it, but it lives in us and is working in us each and every day. During the Spirit events, we'll learn how the Holy Spirit inspires us to live as good stewards and helps us discover how to live out our stewardship calling.**

INTRODUCING THE SUMMER EVENTS ABOUT DISCIPLES

Pull out a pair of sandals. **Jesus and his followers wore sandals because they lived in a place where there's lots of sand and it's hot most of the time. And since it's summer, I bet a bunch of us are wearing sandals too. That's fitting because we are also disciples of Jesus. A big part of discipleship is stewardship. During the two Discipleship events, we'll explore how we can be good disciples by being good stewards—and vice versa!**

INTRODUCING THE SUMMER EVENTS ABOUT CHURCH

Raise your hand if you think that the church is a building. Now raise your hand if you think that the church is the people. That was a trick question because both are true. When it comes to stewardship, it's the people in the church that are doing the work. Church buildings are sometimes a tool that helps us do that work. During our two events focused on Church, we'll discover all the ways we steward our resources to help those in need.

INTRODUCING THE SUMMER EVENTS ABOUT WORLD

Set out a globe. **Our Christian community isn't just here in our town or our state or our country. Point out Palestine on the globe and share that Jesus lived there. We are connected to Christians all around the world. During our events focused on World, we'll discover the ways we can be good stewards to people in different countries and celebrate how we are part of a huge community of God's good stewards who live in different places.**

GROWING AS GOOD STEWARDS

SUPPLIES

- Small, hardy houseplant (such as philodendron or spider plant)
- Pot (ceramic or plastic, 8–12 inches in diameter)
- Soil
- Watering can with water
- Trowel
- Sprout icon from page 8
- Laminator or clear, self-adhesive paper
- Wooden chopstick
- Glue or tape

PREPARATION

1. Optional: Ask a houseplant expert or master gardener from the church to help you select a plant and prepare for this activity.
2. In a visible place, set out your supplies for planting the small houseplant in the large pot—plant, pot, soil, watering can with water, and trowel.
3. Cut out the sprout icon from page 8. Laminate it using a laminator or clear, self-adhesive paper.
4. Use glue or tape to attach the icon to a chopstick.

ACTIVITY: STEWART THE STEWARDSHIP PLANT

Hold up your small houseplant. **This plant is just a baby. Over the next several gatherings, we're going to practice being good stewards of this plant. Let's call our baby plant Stewart the Stewardship Plant. What does Stewart need to grow big and strong and healthy? (water, light, etc.) Let's start by moving Stewart to a bigger pot, so he has room to grow.** Recruit a volunteer or two to help you transplant the small plant to the large pot. **First, we shovel some soil into the pot. The soil is rich in plant food to help feed Stewart. Then we place Stewart in the pot and surround him with more soil. I think Stewart is probably thirsty in all that dry soil—let's give Stewart some water. Now Stewart is settled in his new home!** Thank your helpers, and invite them to return to their seats.

Taking care of Stewart the Stewardship Plant is one way to be a good steward of God's creation. Over the next several weeks, we'll learn about how we can be good stewards of God's creation, God's people, and more. Each week, we'll make sure Stewart has enough water, and we'll add a memento to Stewart's pot. Hold up the chopstick with the sprout icon. **This week, we'll add a baby plant sprout to remind us of planting baby Stewart and helping him grow.** Find a spot near a window for Stewart to live in between events.

SENT OUT TOGETHER

SUPPLIES

- Bible

PREPARATION

- None

ACTIVITY: BIBLE READING

Before we finish, let's learn a Bible verse together. Hold up your Bible. **This verse is from a letter in the New Testament called 1 Peter. It is chapter 4, verse 10: "Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received."** Let's say it together. Say each line and ask the group to repeat:

Like good stewards
of the manifold
grace of God,
serve one another
with whatever gift
each of you
has received.
1 Peter 4:10

As we grow as good stewards throughout the summer, we'll keep this verse in our hearts and minds, remembering that we have been given the gift of grace and we can be good stewards of that gift by sharing God's grace with others.

Say the verse one more time together.

Now, turn to the person next to you and tell them one new thing you heard today. Take a few minutes for sharing, and then bring the group back together.

CLOSING PRAYER

Finish your time together with prayer.

Dear God, we give thanks for this time together to learn about being good stewards of your grace, your word, your creation. Help us grow as good stewards and as followers of you, together. Amen.



ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES



EAT TOGETHER

KICKOFF MEAL

Build community by eating together. Here are some suggestions for snacks and meals to serve during this kickoff event. Provide water to drink throughout your time together.



**Before serving any food, always check for food allergies. Provide a nut-free environment with gluten-free options.*

Snack Suggestions

- Green fruits and vegetables (for Stewart-inspired snacking)
- Cookies or cupcakes frosted with letters that spell STEWARDSHIP

Meal Suggestions

- Potluck meal that includes all ages planning the menu, serving the food, and cleaning up afterward



GO OUTSIDE TOGETHER

OUTDOOR TOUR

Supplies

- None

Preparation

1. Arrange for your congregation's custodian, groundskeeper, or property committee member to give tours of the exterior of the church building.

Have participants gather in their table groups from Gathering Together. Have your tour guide give one small group at a time a tour of the outside of your church. The guide should share about what goes into a typical week and month of caring for the property and describe how seasonal changes affect this work. Emphasize that caring for the church grounds is one way to practice stewardship of what God has given us.

What kind of attention is given to the plants and trees? What kinds of wildlife live near the property, and what is done to care for these creatures? How long does it take to [sweep the steps]? What's their favorite part of the job?



EXPLORE INSIDE TOGETHER

INDOOR TOUR

Supplies

- None

Preparation

1. Invite a member of the Altar Guild to share about their job as a steward of the sanctuary.

Have participants gather in their table groups from Gathering Together. Have your tour guide give one small group at a time a tour of the sanctuary or worship space in your church. The guide should share about how they care for the worship space. What do the members of the Altar Guild do each week to prepare the sanctuary for worship? What's a parament? Where do they store the paraments? What do they like about their job? How does their job serve the body of Christ?



TAKE CARE TOGETHER

FURRY FRIEND FUN

Supplies

- Pet care supplies

Preparation

1. Invite someone who has a pet or cares for animals to bring in one of their furry friends (or friends with fins, or scales, or flippers, or feathers), as well as some of the items used in that friend's care.

Have participants gather in their table groups from Gathering Together. Have your volunteer meet with one group at a time to introduce their pet and talk about how they take care of their pet. What goes into caring for this animal? Invite participants to think about how care for God's creatures fulfills God's command in Genesis 1:28.



**Be sure to check ahead of time that no one in your group has animal allergies or animal phobias.*

THREE QUESTIONS

1. What do you like about the age you are?
 2. What is something you are looking forward to this summer?
 3. What is something you take care of in your family, like a pet, a toy, or a device?
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