



June 5, 2024

MESSENGER

QUOTE FOR TODAY

"You must understand this, my beloved brothers and sisters: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger, for human anger does not produce God's righteousness. Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls."

James 1:19-21

INFO

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God Has Trusted Us with the ABC Properties!

Stewardship has always been a big subject in churches. We usually hear about it in connection with promotion of an increase in the financial challenges of supporting church expenses, staff salaries and missionary enterprises. It has to do with the money we put in the offering plate week by week.

But there's another kind of stewardship that most church congregations don't think about as much: it's the stewardship of the properties and assets previous generations of believers have passed on to us. ABC's campus includes five separate parcels of land acquired over more than a century. Here's how it happened:

- In 1904 property on the northwest corner of Calaveras and El Molino was donated to build Altadena's first church. However, the pioneer community felt that educating its children should be the first priority, so a school was built instead (now Altadena Elementary).
- In 1906 the church was actually built across the street, in the area that is now ABC's lawn. The first congregation was Methodist; they sold it to the Baptists in 1934. Sometime in the 1950s a parsonage for the Pastor's family was built north of the church.
- In 1956 a Swedish Baptist Church from Pasadena merged with the Altadena group and brought their resources with them. The combined congregation began to think big, envisioning a larger building in the lawn area. As part of their plan, our current structure was built with the idea that it would ultimately become the Education Building. The larger church was never constructed, and our building has been the worship sanctuary ever since.
- Meanwhile, as part of their expansive vision, the merged congregation of the 1960s saw the need for more parking and they managed to purchase the two properties north of the current church, both of which included small houses.

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- In 1972 ABC leaders realized that the properties owned by the church had the potential to meet community needs. Through a program known as TOUCH,¹ they discovered that neighbors of the church were very anxious to have quality affordable childcare options. This is how Altadena Children's Center came into existence; it soon occupied the former parsonage and the two building on the northern lots.

I've been here as a Pastor for over 50 years, and I've recently been thinking about my stewardship of the church properties that have been gathered by the ABC generations before me. They've been entrusted to me and the rest of ABC's team of leaders. What kind of a steward have I been?

Based on Biblical teaching, and especially Jesus' "Parable of the Talents,"² I think there are five things I'm responsible to do as an ABC property steward: (1) Maintain and preserve it; (2) Maximize its use; (3) Use it in ways that glorify God and build his Kingdom; (4) Expand and enhance it, if possible; (5) Pass it on to future generations of stewards. It was to focus on maximizing the use of the buildings and grounds that I called for the appointment of a Property Use Committee about a year ago. We've only met once, but we've got some challenges ahead. In the realities of 2024, we need to revisit our church's policies about rental of facilities for weddings, funerals, parties, community meetings, film-making, etc. County zoning changes may open up new opportunities for meeting community needs.

Recently, we were approached about renting a portion of the ABC parking lot for construction workers at Monte Cedro Retirement Community across the street.³ The contract we signed will enable us to tackle some serious maintenance projects, such as resurfacing the entryway patio, repaving the parking lot, etc. or enhance church programs. This may inconvenience us a bit, but I'm sure the benefits will make it worthwhile.

So, all you ABC stewards, join me as we rededicate ourselves to the high calling to care for God's possessions here at the heart of Altadena!⁴

Pastor George Van Alstine

¹ "Transforming Others Under Christ's Hand"

² Matthew 25:14-30

³ The area they will be occupying is along the east wall, from the trash bin to the gated divider, including 20 parking spaces.

⁴ Of course, stewardship has a much broader application than money and possessions. Biblical stewardship begins in the Garden of Eden story, where Adam and Eve are given "dominion" over other living things on earth and is imbedded in Israel's occupation of the Holy Land, as well as virtually every aspect of their lives as God's People. In the modern world, we recognize the profound impact we humans have on the environment around us and are (slowly) begin