

**ONE HOME, ONE FAMILY**  
**A Reflection on the Meaning of Stewardship**  
**Kendall Clark Baker**

*[based on a reflection at the October meeting  
of the PNC Stewardship Committee]*

Preachers know that the root behind the word “stewardship” is a Greek word, ***oikos***, meaning quite simply, “house.” A steward (***oikonomos***) is, literally, a person who manages the household and its material resources—the one who does the shopping, pays the bills, oversees the calendar, sees that everyone is fed, makes sure the kids are picked up from school, and so forth. It’s an actual person, doing quite ordinary, yet essential, tasks.

The word “steward” shows up in the New Testament in several places. Like in Jesus’ parable of the shrewd servant. And the parable of the workers in the vineyard. In writing to the Christians in Corinth Paul introduces himself as a steward: “Think of us in this way, as servants of Christ and *stewards* of God’s mysteries.”

This same Greek root, ***oikos***, shows up in other words we use every day. Like ecology. And ecumenical. And economics.

- Ecology (***oikología***) is a study of how all living beings are interrelated in our one shared home called earth. How might our understanding of global warming and species destruction be impacted if we imagined Earth to be a home we share with all living creatures?
- Ecumenical (***oikoumenikós***) means all the inhabited earth; literally, the entire human family sharing the same home. How might our nation’s pandemic response to third world countries—prioritizing how vaccines are to be distributed—be changed if we recognized that the Covid virus thinks we all live in the same house?
- Economics (***oikonomía***) is a study of how the family’s limited resources are managed, how they are created and distributed. How might our approach as Americans to questions of affirmative action and reparations and policing be influenced by an understanding of the continuing effects of some members of the family having benefited from the unpaid slave labor of other members of the family?

To bring this all “home,” so to speak: The Stewardship Committee “manages” the physical resources of our home (***oikos***) which is the Pacific Northwest Conference United Church of Christ. As stewards we are managers. Or perhaps that is too grandiose. More accurately we are “assistant managers” helping the Board and all the Conference to oversee how shared resources are responsibly received and dispersed in a just, equitable, and accountable manner, enabling the entire household to be effective in its mission.

This is the same task we all have in our local churches when we bring our offerings to worship. When we create a budget and keep track of it throughout the year. When we carry out our annual stewardship drive. We are all stewards. Let’s do everything in our power to make sure our house is a home where all are valued and we function as one family.