

Here's Your Stewardship 'Toolkit' for August 2018!

This month's theme: Stewardship of Our Church

Rev. Rob Blezard, Assistant to the Bishop
Lower Susquehanna Synod
rblezard@lss-elca.org

Good, thoughtful, consistent communication, education and action will help develop a healthy culture of stewardship and generosity in your congregation. This kit is designed to help get you there!

You can use the resources of this kit by themselves to educate and encourage stewardship, but they would be more effective as a monthly emphasis that lifted up a different aspect of stewardship. You could plan bible studies, temple talks, a preaching series and other activities.

This month's emphasis is **Stewardship of Our Church**. Future emphases are:

September: Stewardship of Our Work Life

October: Stewardship of Our Money

November: Stewardship and Gratitude

December: Stewardship for Advent & Christmas

January: Stewardship of Time

February: Stewardship of Loving Relationships

Here's what you'll find below:

-Stewardship Snippets: Put a "Stewardship Snippet" every week in your Sunday bulletin! It's a quote from the week's Revised Common Lectionary lessons, followed by a brief reflection. Just cut and paste!

-Newsletter Articles: Publish something in your newsletter every month on stewardship and faith, or post it on your website. Keep your people thinking about stewardship. Just cut and paste!

-Links to Resources: You'll find links to resources on the Web:

-The **"think it" resource** – Something thoughtful and insightful to get your mind turning and your soul fired up. Share it with your leadership, or use it for a temple talk.

-The **"teach it" resource** – Your folks ought to prayerfully and faithfully wrestle with some of stewardship's biblical, theological and discipleship issues.

-The **"do it" resource** – Talk, as they say, is cheap, so put your stewardship efforts into action.

-The **"preach it" resource** – Check out the weekly Lectionary Reflection written by Lower Susquehanna Synod pastor and synod staff person Sharron Blezard.

-General Resource Websites: – These are places you can go for great ideas!

Stewardship Snippets

Copy and paste into your bulletin!

Source: Rob Blezard

Stewardship Snippet

Aug. 5, 2018 (11th Sunday after Pentecost, Year B)

John 6:35 – Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

In the Lord's Prayer we ask God to "Give us today our daily bread." Jesus reminds us that he is the true bread that feeds our lives and souls. Daily we partake of Jesus through prayer and Scripture, and as often as we may through Holy Communion.

Stewardship Snippet

Aug. 12, 2018 (12th Sunday after Pentecost, Year B)

Ephesians 4:31,32 – Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.

As God's called and blessed community, Christians live by different rules than "the world," which is too-often angry and blameful. We are good stewards of community and relationships when we do our best to live with kindness and love.

Stewardship Snippet

Aug. 19, 2018 (13th Sunday after Pentecost, Year B)

Ephesians 5:15,16 – Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil.

God gives all of us the same abundance of time – 24 hours in every day, and it's so easy to waste! Steward disciples pray for wisdom to live each day to its fullest, and to turn away from the world's evils.

Stewardship Snippet

Aug. 26, 2018 (14th Sunday after Pentecost, Year B)

John 6:68 – Simon Peter answered Jesus, "Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life."

We hear so many voices in our culture luring us to follow by promising us prosperity, power, fun, escape, prestige, etc. But steward disciples know that only Jesus has the words of true life, eternal life. We listen only for Jesus' words.

Newsletter article

Select the one below, or from the [Toolkit Newsletter Article Archive](#)

Reprint permission is granted for local congregational use. Just copy and paste into your newsletter!

Please include the copyright notice. Other uses please inquire: rblezard@lss-elca.org.

Stewardship of our church

At all times there must be and remain one holy, Christian church. It is the assembly of all believers among whom the gospel is purely preached and the holy sacraments are administered according to the gospel.

Augsburg Confession, Article VII

Steward-discipleship means taking care of all that God has blessed us with. We think of our health, our relationships and our money, but our church? You bet!

The church the only organization whose *primary purpose* is to bring people into intimate relationship with God and also gather them as sacred community. Without church, how would people grow in faith? How would the Gospel be spread to all nations, as Jesus commands in Matthew 28:19, 20?

So what does it mean to be a good steward of our church? Here are some ideas:

Focus: We are dedicated to God's Word and Sacrament as the means by which God's grace is poured into us and out to the world. Our service projects and social events may flow from this, but they are secondary.

Community: As the Augsburg Confession (above) declares, the church is the community of God's people dedicated to Word and Sacrament. We build strong community through healthy relationships guided by principles of Christian love, trust, honesty, truth, forbearance, forgiveness.

Building: Our building is NOT the church, but a tool of the church for ministry. We provide the resources to maintain our building as useful for the Gospel, but feel free to move on if it no longer serves.

Resources: Understanding that ministry to God's people takes resources, we give generously of our time and talents. We strive to give a tithe – 10 percent of our financial blessings.

Faith formation: It takes learning and practice to grow closer to God, both as individuals and community. We support and participate in studying the Bible and theology. We promote and engage in spiritual practices that feed our souls.

Although we tend to think that our church has a mission, it's more accurate to say that God has a mission, and that mission has a church. We grow in faith as people and community when we dedicate ourselves to good stewardship of our church.

--Rob Blezard

Copyright © 2018, Rev. Robert Blezard. Reprinted by permission. Pastor Blezard serves as an assistant to the bishop of the Lower Susquehanna Synod and works as content editor for www.stewardshipoflife.org.

Links to resources

The “think it” resource

[Ecclesiology, Mission and Structure](#): Ecclesiology is a fancy word that refers simply to matters of the Christian church. This essay traces the history of the Lutheran understanding of church from Martin Luther’s time up to present-day ELCA. Written by former ELCA Presiding Bishop H. George Anderson, a church historian and theologian, the article is informative and challenging. What does our history mean for your congregation today ... and tomorrow?

(<http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/ecclesiology.pdf>)

The “teach it” resource

[Treasure in Jars of Clay](#): Here is a collection of 12 Bible studies dealing with the nature of the church. They can be adapted for use as a stand-alone workshop or a series. From Abilene Christian University’s Siburt Institute for Christian Ministry.

(<http://www.acu.edu/content/dam/acu/website/Siburt%20Institute/Documents/Resources/Bible%20Study%20Resources/Treasure%20in%20Jars%20of%20Clay%20-%20The%20Missional%20Church%20-%202012%20Lessons.pdf>)

The “do it” resource

[Vital Congregations](#): Our brothers and sisters from the United Methodist Church have gathered some resources to help leaders develop congregations that are healthier and more vital.

(<http://www.umc.org/how-we-serve/vital-congregations>)

The “preach it” resource

[Weekly Lectionary Stewardship Reflection](#) – Sharron Blezard, Lower Susquehanna Synod assistant to the bishop and pastor, looks at stewardship implications in the week’s Revised Common Lectionary lessons. (www.stewardshipoflife.org)

General Stewardship Resource Websites

[ELCA Stewardship Resources](#) – Our denomination’s deep well of materials. (elca.org/stewardship)

[Stewardship of Life Institute](#) – Headquartered at United Lutheran Seminary, this site has a trove of resources in areas areas. (www.stewardshipoflife.org)

[Center for Steward Leadership](#) – Luther Seminary’s excellent. (www.luthersem.edu/stewardship/)

[The ELCA Foundation](#) a ministry of our denomination. (www.elca.org/give/elca-foundation)

[Lower Susquehanna Synod Stewardship](#) – Select free or low-cost resources. (www.lss-elca.org/faith-formation/stewardship/)

-end-