

Your Stewardship 'Toolkit' for October 2018!

This month's theme: **Stewardship of Our Money**

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Good, thoughtful, consistent communication, education and action can 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 about 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 Money**.

Future emphases are:

November: Stewardship and Gratitude

December: Stewardship for Advent & Christmas

January: Stewardship of Time

February: Stewardship of Loving Relationships

March: Stewardship in Lent

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 Article: 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

Oct. 7, 2018 (20th Sunday after Pentecost, Year B)

Psalm 8:4, 6 – What are human beings that you [Lord] are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet.

God gives us dominion over God's creation, which means we're in charge. But that also means we have a duty to treat the created world respectfully and use its resources responsibly. How do you think we're doing? As steward-disciples, how can we do better?

Stewardship Snippet

Oct. 14, 2018 (21st Sunday after Pentecost, Year B)

Mark 10:24b, 25 – Jesus said to them again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the Kingdom of God."

When he talks about money, Jesus frequently uses words of warning. Why does wealth hinder rich people from entering the Kingdom of God? How are you managing? How can we, as steward-disciples, do better?

Stewardship Snippet

Oct. 21, 2018 (22nd Sunday after Pentecost, Year B)

Mark 10:42-44 – Jesus called them and said to them, "You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all.

Jesus gives us a reality that's topsy-turvy from what we know! We achieve greatness by serving others? Why is this so hard? What kind of heart-transformation does it require?

Stewardship Snippet

Oct. 28, 2018 (23rd Sunday after Pentecost, Year B)

Mark 10:51 – Then Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man said to him, "My teacher, let me see again."

The blind man articulates the faithful prayer of all steward-disciples. We want to see! Help us see the world around us through eyes of God's love and mercy.

Newsletter article

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

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Stewardship of our money

And Jesus said to them, "Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions." --Luke 12:15

Jesus often uses words of caution when teaching about money. Jesus warns us of money's power to capture our souls and turn us from loving God first and most, and then our neighbors as ourselves.

Because we North Americans live in a wealthy culture, the temptation to love money more than God and neighbor may be worse than it was for the folks of Jesus' time. So, we need to take Jesus' warnings to heart and be sure to keep money in its proper place. Here are some ideas:

Develop gratitude: Be happy for (and with) what you have. Dwell on your blessings rather than your wants. Constantly entertaining thoughts of your unfilled desires leads to scarcity thinking and unhappiness.

Celebrate sufficiency: Learn to live on what you earn. Excessive debt corrodes our wellbeing by causing us stress and hunger for more. Strive to live without credit cards and make choices to help your income match expenses.

Embrace generosity: Our culture tells us that the more we have the happier we will be, but that's really not so -- once we have enough to meet our true needs. Miserly people tend to be miserable no matter how much they have, while generous people tend to be happy even if they have modest means. Giving generously is a spiritual discipline that breaks the power that money has to control us.

Good stewardship of our money helps us avoid the traps that Jesus warns about. Stewardship means managing our wealth rather than letting it manage us. Free from money's traps and lures and lies, we are free to love God first and then our neighbor as ourselves.

--Rob Blezard

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Links to resources

The "think it" resource

[Mark Allen Powell, "Faithful Living: A Biblical Ethic of Financial Stewardship."](#) One of the ELCA's most prophetic and thoughtful voices, Mark Allen Powell explores a Christian disciple's relationship with money in this article from *The Journal of Lutheran Ethics*. A pastor, prolific author, speaker and seminary professor, Powell clearly outlines principles for handling wealth.

(<https://www.elca.org/JLE/Articles/534>)

The "teach it" resource

Affluenza: Watch this 55-minute video from PBS, just as hard-hitting and relevant as it was when it was produced in 1997. It explores the paradox of why North Americans are unhappy despite possessing more than most people in the world. Afterwards, use the **EXCELLENT** [study guide materials](#) to delve deeper into the problem – and the solution! (Follow up by watching the 1998 follow-up, [Escape from Affluenza](#), which explores simple living.)

Video URL: <https://www.filmsforaction.org/watch/affluenza-1997/>

Study guide URL: <https://www.pbs.org/kcts/affluenza/map/map.html>

Follow-up video URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sj6emnXQwLw>

The “do it” resource

[Five Steps Toward a Simple Life](#) – We can learn a lot from monastics, those brothers and sisters who take lifetime vows of poverty and service in the name of the Lord. This article from the Order of St. Francis (to which current Pope Francis belongs) has a lot to say. Adopt some of their ideas in your own life, or form a group of folks in your congregation to take the journey together.

(<https://www.franciscanmedia.org/5-steps-toward-a-simple-life/>)

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.

(<https://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 website. (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/)

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