

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

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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!

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 money 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

February 4, 2018 Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany, Year B)

Isaiah 40:31 -- "Those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."

God entrusts us to be good stewards of all we have, but especially our strength, our vision, our courage, our life-energy. And in using these gifts, we are not alone. Isaiah reminds us that God renews us, fills us with power and focus. How do you "wait" for God's renewal?

Stewardship Snippet

February 11, 2018 (Transfiguration Sunday, Year B)

2 Corinthians 4:6 -- For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

When do feel dim, more in darkness than in light? Everyone does once in a while. Here we are reminded that God's eternal light always shines in our hearts. As stewards of the mysteries of God, in prayer and faith we draw close to the light.

Stewardship Snippet

February 18, 2018 (1st Sunday in Lent, Year B)

Psalm 25:4-5 – Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long.

As steward-disciples of God, how do we keep our lives focused and on track? Only with God's help. Daily we pray for the Almighty to teach us, guide us, lead us, correct us. How do you "wait" for God?

Stewardship Snippet

February 25, 2018 (2nd Sunday in Lent, Year B)

Exodus 20:8-11 – Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work – you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.

Take one day off per week – God's orders! God spends FOUR verses to tell us to keep the sabbath day holy. It's that important! Holy stewardship of our lives means we take time to refrain from work. So chill out! It's literally a sin not to!

Newsletter article

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Source: Rob Blezard, Lower Susquehanna Synod

[Stewardship 101](#)

Ash Wednesday stewardship

"Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return." -Evangelical Lutheran Worship, p. 254

With these ancient words from Genesis 3:19 and the swipe of a dirty thumb across our foreheads, Ash Wednesday propels us into the season of Lent with the proper context to understand our lives as stewards of the riches that God entrusts to us.

The essential teaching of Ash Wednesday – that we are just mortals, after all – crushes our ego, dispels our pretensions and drives us deep into God's mysteries. Why are we here? What are our lives all about? What's *really* important? Pray over these questions and profound insights emerge.

We are dust. Yes, but we are *God's* dust. Our body consists of trillions of atoms, each one a speck of "dust" created by of God, billions of years ago. God put us together from the very stuff of the universe.

- Therefore, we are quite literally "earthy" beings, made of the same material as air, water, soil and stone. Part of creation, not separate from it, we work to preserve and sustain the health of God's creation for all people and future generations.
- Therefore, we have reverence for our bodies, expressed through healthy living – eating right, exercising, and avoiding illegal drugs and other poisons.

We are breath. We are "dust," certainly, but not *only* dust. Genesis 2:7 describes us as "dust" into which God has "breathed the Holy breath of life." Our life is the breath of God in our dust.

- Therefore, every breath we take is holy. Every breath is a prayer that whispers God's praise and reminds us of God's life force in us.
- Therefore, we look to God to align our lives and ourselves with God's holy reality that arcs towards God's purposes of peace, love, joy, justice and truth.

Our time is brief. Between the time that the "dust" of our lives comes together to form us and when it returns to the earth, we have a finite number of minutes on earth.

- Therefore, every hour, every second is sacred. There is not a single moment one to waste. We spend our time wisely, carefully, prayerfully.
- Therefore, we do not cling to our possessions, knowing that we don't really "own" anything, but only hold onto it for a little while.
- Therefore, we nourish our lives with world treasures of real and lasting value – friendships, trust, love, joy, service, generosity and harmony.

This Lent spend time in prayer, with openness and honesty. See how God will turn your heart and mind, transforming you into the person you were created to be. Reflect each day on Ash Wednesday. "Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

--*Rob Blezard*

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Links to resources

The "think it" resource

[Martin Luther's Pastoral Teachings on Money](#): Sure, Martin Luther shook the 16th century church with his insights about justification by grace through faith, but did you know he had some downright prophetic observations on wealth? Money is a deeply spiritual matter, Luther says, that reveals and challenges us to love God and neighbor. This article in Luther Seminary's "Word & World" explains it well.

The "teach it" resource

[The Meaning of the Sabbath](#): Help your people understand what it means to live in “God’s time.” In our culture Sundays have become just like our busy weekend Saturday, so it’s important to remember that keeping the Sabbath day holy is not just a good tip for your mental and physical health, it’s a commandment — one of the Big Ten! Make it a part of your 2018 Christian education plan to teach about your faithful people about the Sabbath. This article from Bible.org has great information from which to craft a lesson plan.

The “do it” resource

[Stewards of God’s Love](#): This is a great comprehensive resource for congregations to lift up the spiritual aspects of stewardship and giving throughout the year. The ELCA published the 58-page guide and inserts in 2013, and it has proven quite a hit. Available for free PDF download.

The “preach it” resource

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

General Stewardship Resource Websites

[Stewardship of Life Institute](#)– Headquartered at United Lutheran Seminary, this site has a trove of resources on stewardship in areas of congregational finance, individual finance, discipleship, education, preaching, creation care, and more.

[Center for Steward Leadership](#) – Luther Seminary’s excellent website with lots of resources.

[The ELCA Foundation](#) has resources at its website, as well as consultants who can meet with your congregational leaders to develop ideas and plans for long-term financial stability.

[Lower Susquehanna Synod Stewardship](#) – You’ll find a selected group of great resources.

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