

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

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!

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

May 6, 2018 (6th Sunday of Easter, Year B)

John 15:16 – Jesus said, "You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name."

God has chosen us and given us our bodies, our minds and our spirits. As steward/disciples we are entrusted with these gifts (and God's Holy Word) for a purpose – to bear fruit for a world that needs it badly.

Stewardship Snippet

May 13, 2018 (7th Sunday of Easter, Year B)

John 17:18 – [Jesus prayed to God about his disciples,] "As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world."

Because we live in an evil world, we can be tempted to withdraw, shut down, and disengage. But Jesus sends us steward/disciples out into the world, to be bearers of God's love and light. We engage the world God loves.

Stewardship Snippet

May 20, 2018 (Pentecost Sunday, Year B)

Psalm 204:24, 25 – O LORD, how manifold are your works! ... The earth is full of your creatures. Yonder is the sea, great and wide, creeping things innumerable are there, living things both small and great. *We sometimes forget that animals, fish, birds, insects and reptiles are also creations of God that need to live. As stewards of creation, we honor all living things and work to ensure that they, like us, have safe, clean, abundant habitat.*

Stewardship Snippet

May 27, 2018 (Trinity Sunday, Year B)

Isaiah 6:8 –Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I; send me!"

Our lives belong to God, and we reach greatest fulfillment when we are accomplishing God's purposes. We are living right when we can respond to God's calling with an enthusiastic, "Here I am; send me!"

Newsletter article

Reprint permission 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.

Thank God for our families

[Jesus was dying on the cross.] When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." -John 19:26-27

On the second Sunday of this month we celebrate the mothers and mother figures in our lives, and then in June we celebrate our fathers and father figures. What a wonderful opportunity to honor the strong bond between parents and children. How strong? The first use of the word "love" in the Bible, Genesis 22:2, describes the connection between Abraham and his son, Isaac.

Family is one of our most valuable gifts from God, and one that, as all holy gifts, we are entrusted to treasure, love and nourish. As parents, we are responsible for nourishing children to become healthy adults. And as children, we are responsible for caring for parents as they age.

Jesus indicates in the passage above that there need not be a blood connection for a parent-child relationship (as any family with adopted children can attest). In Matthew 12:46-50, Jesus actually

redefines family, saying that all who love and follow him are mothers, brothers, sisters, fathers. So, all of us are parent, child and sibling to one another. Now THAT'S some family!

As we honor the mother and father figures this spring, we can also challenge ourselves to be better stewards of the family bonds God has given us.

- Explore through Scripture what it means to be a family, including a faith family.
- Work with your congregation promote healthy family connections.
- Support and accompany families that are in crisis or paralyzed by dysfunction.
- Learn about foster-parent programs and support foster families.
- Explore and support Big Brother and Big Sister programs. Be a mentor to a child or youth.
- Befriend a senior citizen who may not have children (or children nearby).
- Remember that not all family relationships are positive. Avoid judgment and listen thoughtfully to those whose experiences may differ from yours.
- With your congregation, explore ways to live as brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers to one another.

God ordained families to be the fundamental unit of human life. We can be good stewards of family relationships by caring for one another and helping everyone to grow into the faith family God intends.

--*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 also works as content editor for www.stewardshipoflife.org.

Links to resources

The “think it” resource

[Stewardship of Family](#): One of God’s greatest gifts to us, family deserves our attention as we grow and our family needs and dynamics change. This essay from the Greek Orthodox Church helps us understand our opportunities and challenges that family presents us as we age.

(saintandrewgoc.org/home/2014/8/4/stewardship-of-family.html)

The “teach it” resource

[10 Bible Verses about Family](#): Explore what Scripture says about family and family dynamics. This blog from Patheos gives you ideas for hours of spiritual discussion.

(www.patheos.com/blogs/christiancrier/2013/08/28/top-10-bible-verses-about-family/)

The “do it” resource

[Healthy Relationships Cultivate a Healthy Church](#): Churches often say they are a family, but many don’t exhibit behavior that is very loving or healthy. Leaders in a church can help set the tone by modeling respectful, healthy attitudes and behavior towards one another. From Rick Warren’s website;

(pastors.com/healthy-relationships-cultivate-healthy-church/)

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

[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. (www.stewardshipoflife.org)

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

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

[Lower Susquehanna Synod Stewardship](#) – You’ll find a selected group of great free or low-cost resources. (www.lss-elca.org/faith-formation/stewardship/)

-end-