

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

This month's theme: Stewardship of Our Leisure Time

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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!

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 aspects.

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

August: Stewardship of Church

September: Stewardship of Our Work Life

October: Stewardship of Our Money

November: Stewardship and Gratitude

December: Stewardship for Advent & Christmas

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!

-Consultation and Coaching: – Did you know there are experts willing to meet with your congregation?

Stewardship Snippets

Copy and paste into your bulletin!

Source: Rob Blezard

Stewardship Snippet

July 1, 2018 (6th Sunday after Pentecost, Year B)

Mark 5:34 – Jesus said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

We all need to be good stewards of our bodies, minds and souls. The story of the woman with a hemorrhage reminds us that in addition to nutritious eating, regular exercise and other healthy habits we may adopt, it's our faith that gives us total health. Care for our souls is key to caring for our whole self.

July 8, 2018 (7th Sunday after Pentecost, Year B)

Mark 6:8, 9 – Jesus ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics.

What do you need for your journey in life? Most of us think we need far more than we actually do, and our lives become weighed down with our possessions. When Jesus sends out the disciples with very little, he reminds us that we, too, need very little in life. What could you do without?

July 15, 2018 (8th Sunday after Pentecost, Year B)

Psalms 85:10-12 – Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other. Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky. The LORD will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase.

Everybody wants a life of peace and security, but most of us try to achieve it the world's way – by accumulating power, treasure and pleasure. The Psalm sets us right: It's relationship with God and one another that give us what we want.

July 22, 2018 (9th Sunday after Pentecost, Year B)

Mark 6:31 – Jesus said to them, "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat.

In our time and culture, busy-ness has emerged as a major source of stress. Being good stewards of our own peace of mind, we know that Jesus' words to the disciples are for us, too. We need to get away from our sources of busy-ness and stress to rest.

July 29, 2018 (10th Sunday after Pentecost, Year B)

Psalms 145:15, 16 – The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season. You open your hand, satisfying the desire of every living thing.

Our God is a god of abundance. As steward/disciples we look to God for all that we need, knowing that God provides.

Newsletter article

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

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Stewardship of our leisure time

I commend enjoyment, for there is nothing better for people under the sun than to eat, and drink, and enjoy themselves, for this will go with them in their toil through the days of life that God gives them under the sun. Ecclesiastes 8:15

Busy-ness keeps us from living with joy and peace in today's 24/7 world, but Scripture reminds us that this is hardly new. Ecclesiastes was written some 2,500 years ago! Ecclesiastes does not give license for mindless pleasure-seeking, but rather affirms that our hard work should be balanced with time for relaxation and enjoyment with friends and family.

Saints and mystics have long touted the need for rest and renewal. In the monastic tradition it's referred to as *otium sanctum* – Holy Leisure. Not just wasting our free time, but using it for renewal. As steward/disciples, we aim to use our leisure time wisely. Here are some ideas:

Keep the Sabbath: God actually *commands* us to stop working one day per week, as Exodus 20:8-11 makes clear. It's one of the Top Ten! Though we are prohibited from *working* on the Sabbath, there is no prohibition against leisure. (Why else would God give us a day off?)

Plan your vacation: Even if you're taking simple STAYcation, *plan* your time for maximum rest and enjoyment. Visit local museums or historic places. Take day trips to local parks, mountains or waterways. Invite friends or family over. Select books to read, movies to stream and games to play.

Manage your schedule: Are you a slave to your appointment book, driven by *other people's* priorities? Put yourself first – scheduling in time for leisure. Even if it's just 30 minutes here and there, make – and take – time for yourself!

Find an activity you like: What do you do just for you? Exercise? Read? Scrapbook? Play an instrument? Walk? Fish? Discover – or REdiscover – what brings you joy, then make time to do it.

Socialize: Friends and family make life enjoyable. Spend time with them. Ideas: a hike, a picnic, a meal on your deck, drinks under the stars, a game of cards or a board game.

Invest, don't waste, time: Many activities pass the time but don't give back much in renewal or refreshment. Choose activities wisely.

God expects us to work, but not work ourselves to death. Sabbath and leisure time provide means for us to find balance in our life, as well as friendship, love, renewal and purpose.

--Rob Blezard

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Links to resources

The “think it” resource

[Rethinking our Relaxing](https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/rethinking-our-relaxing): This is a thoughtful interview with Paul Heintzman, author of *Leisure and Spirituality: Biblical, Historical, and Contemporary Perspectives*. Far from being self-indulgent, leisure time is holy time, meant for renewal and enjoyment. It’s part of a faithful discipleship walk.

(<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/rethinking-our-relaxing>)

The “teach it” resource

[25 Encouraging Scriptures for Rest and Relaxation](https://lynn dove.com/2012/07/09/25-encouraging-scriptures-for-rest-and-relaxation/): Christian author Lynn Dove identifies these passages about rest and relaxation. Explore them by answering these questions: What does this say? What does this mean? How can it help me live more fully as Christ’s disciple?

(<https://lynn dove.com/2012/07/09/25-encouraging-scriptures-for-rest-and-relaxation/>)

The “do it” resource

[Live Better by Keeping Sabbath](https://www.guideposts.org/better-living/health-and-wellness/living-longer-living-better/how-to-balance-your-life-keep-the): It’s not only a good idea to take a full day off from work and enter into sacred time, it’s also a commandment -- one of God’s Top Ten! Yet one survey showed only 10 percent of pastors keep it, so one can only imagine how many everyday Christians observe it. *Guideposts* magazine offers these five suggestions for keeping the Sabbath!

(<https://www.guideposts.org/better-living/health-and-wellness/living-longer-living-better/how-to-balance-your-life-keep-the>)

The “preach it” resource

[Weekly Lectionary Stewardship Reflection](http://www.stewardshipoflife.org) – 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](http://www.stewardshipoflife.org) – 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](http://www.luthersem.edu/stewardship/) – Luther Seminary’s excellent website with lots of resources. (www.luthersem.edu/stewardship/)

[The ELCA Foundation](http://www.elca.org/give/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](http://www.lss-elca.org/faith-formation/stewardship/) – You’ll find a selected group of great free or low-cost resources. (www.lss-elca.org/faith-formation/stewardship/)

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