

Your Stewardship Toolkit for May 2019!

*This month's theme: **Stewardship of community***

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Check out my blog: www.thestewardshipguy.com!

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

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 community**

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

May 5, 2019 (Third Sunday of Easter, Year C)

John 21:12a – Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.”

There’s nothing like gathering for a meal to build community. Jesus hosted meals to reassure his disciples of his love and presence. Notice that Jesus’ meals are always relational, not transactional. Fostering community through table fellowship and conversation helps us see the Christ in one another’s faces. Who are you inviting to the table?

Stewardship Snippet

May 12, 2019 (Fourth Sunday of Easter, Year C)

Acts 9:36 – Now in Joppa there was a disciple whose name was Tabitha, which in Greek is Dorcas. She was devoted to good works and acts of charity.

Never underestimate the power of one person to make a difference in the life of a community. Tabitha touched people with good works, including making clothes for others. How are you using your God-given talents for the sake of others?

Stewardship Snippet

May 19, 2019 (Fifth Sunday of Easter, Year C)

John 13:34-35 – I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.

Cultivating safe space where love is the language and there’s room at the table for everyone should be a guiding principle for stewards of community. After all, Jesus commands it. What would it take for our congregation to become known as “the love church” in your community?

Stewardship Snippet

May 26, 2019 (Sixth Sunday of Easter, Year C)

Acts 16:15 – When Lydia and her household were baptized, she urged us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home.”

Hospitality and community go hand in hand. God opens Lydia’s heart, and she opens her home to Paul and his companions. How can we show a wide welcome in our worshiping communities and to the neighborhoods around us?

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.

MAY 2018

Stewardship of community

You shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord. –Leviticus 19:18b

And who is my neighbor? –Luke 10:29b

Think of all the homes, apartments and condos within walking (or easy driving) distance of our congregation. Now ask, how do we interact with these neighbors? Does our congregation understand their issues, joys, opportunities and challenges? How can we love them as ourselves?

Though God has filled the world with neighbors for us to love, we have a special opportunity and responsibility with neighbors who are nearby us. They form our immediate community. Many congregations narrowly define “community” as people who are already part of church, but God calls us to broaden our vision.

Congregations across our denomination are finding renewed energy and purpose by connecting (or reconnecting) with their community neighbors. It takes work and a willingness to go outside our comfort zone, but worth the effort pays off for them and us.

“It’s within our power to become good neighbors, to care for the people around us and to be cared for by the people around us,” write Jay Pathak and Dave Runyon in *The Art of Neighboring* (2012, Baker Books, p. 22), a handy guide for a church to start a neighboring movement. “There really is a different way to live, and we are finding that it is actually the best way to live.”

Loving our neighbors we naturally gather together as community that is blessed by God. It holds true in our personal lives as well as our congregations. As spring and summer unfolds, let’s commit to finding ways to be better stewards of our community, engaging our neighbors, especially those who live closest to our congregation.

--Rob Blezard

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Links to resources

The “think it” resource

[Apartment Ministry Helps Congregation Find New Life](#) – Read the inspirational story of how a struggling United Methodist congregation in Houston found a resurgence of energy when it began reaching out to its neighbors, seeking to love them as themselves. What can your congregation take from the story?

(<https://www.faithandleadership.com/westbury-umcs-apartment-ministry-has-helped-resettled-refugees-and-congregation-find-new-life>)

Two “teach it” resources

[Bible Study on Loving Your Neighbor](#) – Love for neighbor is woven throughout scripture and is given special emphasis in the New Testament. This bible study looks at a sampling of New Testament passages to provide a well-rounded view of how God wants us to care for one another.

(<https://www.patheos.com/blogs/christiancrier/2016/01/22/a-sunday-school-lesson-on-loving-your-neighbor/>)

The “do it” resource

[Congregation-Based Community Organizing](#) – Want to reach your neighbors but don’t know how? The ELCA has resources to get you going strong. The approach is based on bringing together people and organizations with similar interests to tackle common problems and improve life for everybody!

(<https://www.elca.org/Our-Work/Publicly-Engaged-Church/Congregation-based-Community-Organizing>)

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 of congregational and personal stewardship. (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](#) – Selected free or low-cost resources.

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