

Your Stewardship Toolkit for July 2019!

This month's theme: **Stewardship of our civic freedoms**

Rev. Rob Blezard, Assistant to the Bishop
Lower Susquehanna Synod
rblezard@lss-elca.org



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 our civic freedoms**

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

July 7, 2019 (Time after Pentecost—Lectionary 14, Proper 9, Year C)

Galatians 6:10—So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for the family of faith.

Paul reminds us that we are all so integrally connected that when one benefits so do others. It's a truth that often runs counter to what our culture proclaims. In fact, the prosperity and civic freedoms we enjoy today come to us by the efforts and sacrifices of others.

Stewardship Snippet

July 14, 2019 (Time after Pentecost—Lectionary 15, Proper 10, Year C)

Luke 10:27 – Jesus answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.”

We are free people of God, and Jesus teaches us the highest purposes of our freedom: To love God with all our being, and to love our neighbor through acts of kindness and mercy.

Stewardship Snippet

July 21, 2019 (Time after Pentecost—Lectionary 16, Proper 11, Year C)

Colossians 1:15-16 – Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him.

We celebrate the many freedoms and the abundance we enjoy, but we must remember with thanksgiving and humbleness the source of all we have — Christ, who holds all things together and in whom all things will be reconciled.

Stewardship Snippet

July 28, 2019 (Time after Pentecost—Lectionary 17, Proper 12, Year C)

Luke 11:2 – Jesus said to them, “When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come.”

We recite these words of the Lord's Prayer frequently, asking for God's kingdom to come right now, right here on earth! As faithful stewards of God's abundance pray not only with our lips but also our hands and feet for the sake of our neighbors, for the care of creation, and for our love of God.

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.

JULY 2019

Stewardship of our civic freedoms

As Americans celebrate the birthday of our nation, we give thanks for our civic freedoms of speech, religion, assembly, due process, a speedy trial, voting and many more. Our freedom has made us the envy of much of the world.

But as with any valuable gift, our civic freedoms can be abused, neglected or underappreciated to the point where, if we aren't careful, they hardly matter anymore.

Lutherans are guided by Martin Luther's insight that we are simultaneously called to be responsible citizens of "two kingdoms" – first, of God's spiritual realm, and second, of earthly governments of people and laws. The synergy of our "dual citizenship" directs us to be good stewards of our civic freedoms.

Freedom of speech: Yes, even hateful speech and lies are protected under our Constitution, but Christians avoid them in obedience to Jesus' command to love our neighbor as ourselves and by the Eighth Commandment, which Luther explains in *The Small Catechism*: "We should fear and love God, so that we do not tell lies about our neighbors, betray or slander them, or destroy their reputations." We steward this freedom by speaking honestly and insisting others do, too.

Freedom of religion: Millions of people across the globe, including Christians, face persecution and discrimination because of their faith. We dare not take our freedom for granted, but exercise it with joy and defend the rights of others to follow their own consciences.

Freedom from illegal prosecution: Our guarantees of due process in legal, criminal and civil proceedings uphold justice and guard against government misconduct. It works imperfectly, as do all human systems, but as good stewards we fight for justice and the rights for all.

Freedom of self-governance: With its interconnected checks and balances, our three-branch system of government provides stability, accountability and flexibility for change. It's a great system, but it requires us to be informed and involved. We steward this freedom by participating in political processes, voting and insisting on honest government that works for our interests.

This month, as citizens of both God's spiritual realm and the United States of America, we renew our commitment to be good stewards of the freedoms we are privileged to have.

--*Rob Blezard*

Copyright © 2019, Rev. Robert Blezard. Reprinted by permission.

Pastor Blezard serves as an assistant to the bishop of the Lower Susquehanna Synod and works as content editor for www.stewardshipoflife.org. He blogs at www.thestewardshipguy.com.

Links to resources

The “think it” resource

[Luther and Christian Liberty](#) – Luther articulated a thoughtful and faithful vision of Christian freedom based on two contradictory propositions: “A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.” This scholarly essay from the Lutheran Journal of Ethics unpacks Luther’s insight in its context.

(<https://www.elca.org/JLE/Articles/990>)

The “teach it” resource

[How Luther helps today’s citizens](#) – What does it mean that we are “dual citizens” – of both God’s spiritual realm and also our worldly government? What are our responsibilities to each? How are we to live? This refreshingly accessible article from *Living Lutheran* magazine helps clarify matters. Good for personal or group study.

(<https://www.livinglutheran.org/2016/10/luther-helps-todays-citizens/>)

The “do it” resource

[Advocacy as Witness](#) – Raising our political and civic voice is an excellent way to help preserve and expand our civic freedoms. First, it’s exercising our freedom of speech; and second, it’s pushing for justice and freedom of our neighbor. This article and study guide from *Living Lutheran* magazine helps explore the issue and get you going

(<https://livinglutheran.blob.core.windows.net/cdn/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/1610advocacy.pdf>)

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](#) – Select free or low-cost resources.

-end-