

Your Stewardship Toolkit for September 2019!

This month's theme: **Stewardship of our intelligence and gifts**

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Check out my blog: www.thestewardshipguy.com!

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY! This marks the beginning of the fourth year that I have prepared monthly “Stewardship Toolkits!” A reminder: The newsletter articles for the last three years are available to use in the [Toolkit Newsletter Article Archive](#). I pray that the Toolkits may assist your congregation’s stewardship ministry, and I encourage you to offer suggestions and comments on how they may be improved. --[Rob Blezard](#)

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!

The resources of this kit are most effective when used to support a monthly emphasis about a different aspect of stewardship. You could plan bible studies, temple talks, a preaching series and other activities.

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

September 1, 2019 (Proper 17 (22), 12th Sunday after Pentecost)

For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.— **Luke 14:11**

Humility is a trait to be carefully stewarded and cultivated. No matter what your gifts, talents or abilities, cultivating humility will prepare your heart and mind to receive instruction, foster growth and teach others.

Stewardship Snippet

September 8, 2010 (Proper 18 (23), 13th Sunday after Pentecost)

Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers; but their delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law they meditate day and night.— **Psalms 1:1-2**

Who doesn't want to be happy and successful? While there are no guarantees for any of us that life will be smooth sailing, the Psalmist reminds us that learning to delight in God's ways and meditating on scripture daily will keep us focused and moving in the right direction.

Stewardship Snippet

September 15, 2019 (Proper 19 (24), 14th Sunday after Pentecost)

You desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.— **Psalms 51:6**

Self-knowledge is key to all other learning and true growth. This week's lessons remind us how easy it is to deceive ourselves and avoid the deep, hard work of learning who we are and *whose* we are. An important aspect of stewardship is knowing oneself—the good, the bad, and the beloved child of God.

Stewardship Snippet

September 22, 2019 (Proper 20 (25), 15th Sunday after Pentecost)

Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much.— **Luke 16:10**

The parable of the dishonest manager reminds us that everything we have comes from God, and therefore we should treat our gifts and talents with great care and faithfulness. If God has given you a talent or an ability, do your best to steward and cultivate it to the fullest and for the highest good.

Stewardship Snippet

September 29, 2019 (Proper 21 (26), 16th Sunday after Pentecost)

They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life.— **1 Timothy 6:18-19**

The lessons this week remind us of the danger of hoarding our talents and gifts. Whether you are rich in resources, abilities, knowledge or skills, be sure to steward them carefully for the greatest good. In doing so, your own life will be all the richer and God will be glorified.

Newsletter article

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SEPTEMBER 2019

Stewardship of our intelligence and gifts

*Give instruction to the wise, and they will become wiser still;
teach the righteous and they will gain in learning.—Proverbs 9:9*

This month millions of children, youth and adults are back in the classroom for another year of education. At K-12 schools, trade academies, colleges and universities they're training their brains for higher thinking, deepening their knowledge and learning new skills.

These students are not merely drawing on their God-given intelligence and potential, they're actually developing them. What great stewardship of life gifts!

What about the rest of us, we who have ended our formal education? The sad truth is that many of us stop actively learning new things. It's unfortunate, too, because the amazing brains and bodies God has given us have virtually unlimited capacity for learning, growing and developing.

No, we all can't be a Stephen Hawking, Meryl Streep or Michael Jordan, but we can always sharpen our brainpower, express ourselves in the arts and develop our motor skills. In the process, we enrich and expand our lives, and that can lead to greater fulfillment, confidence and opportunity to grow into the fullness that God designs for us. Here are some ideas:

Read. Whether it's biographies, who-done-its, sci-fi, poetry, literature or history, reading not only teaches us things, but it also exercises our brainpower. Start with a commitment to read a book (or two) a month.

Take a class. Many community centers, churches, libraries and senior citizen centers offer enrichment classes on a variety of topics. Learn photography, or conversational Spanish, or quilting. Go deeper: Your local community college may let you "audit" a class for an affordable fee.

Listen or watch. Delve into subjects that interest you by listening to podcasts or watching YouTube videos. Some colleges offer entire lecture series free via podcast or video.

Attend a lecture. Authors, poets, politicians, scientists and entertainers often give public talks at colleges, town halls and other venues.

Write a poem. Or paint a picture, or take a photograph, or pick up a musical instrument. The arts provide a wonderful outlet for our creative selves.

As we watch our children, youth and adults go back to school, let's join them in a commitment to developing the intelligence, skills and abilities that God has given us. It's good stewardship of our lives.

--Rob Blezard

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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

[Review: The SharpBrain’s Guide to Brain Fitness](#) – In this review *Scientific American* weighs in positively on a book whose subtitle says it all: “How to optimize brain health and performance at any age.” The reviewer credits the book with providing real science in a field that is rife with pseudo-science. The article provides plenty of food for thought, but imagine how the book itself might get your neurons popping!

(<https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/beautiful-minds/review-of-the-sharpbrains-guide-to-brain-fitness/>)

The “teach it” resource

[The ELCA Book of Faith Initiative](#)—Here are resources to challenge God’s people not only to grow in learning, but also discipleship! The ELCA’s Book of Faith Initiative offers guidance on helping folks understand how to access Scripture as a guide for their lives of faith.

(<http://www.bookoffaith.org/>)

The “do it” resource

[Help your brain stay young and healthy](#) Every brain changes with age, and mental function changes along with it. Mental decline is common, but simple everyday steps can go a long way in keeping your brain young and healthy, says his article from Harvard Medical School.

(<https://www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/12-ways-to-keep-your-brain-young>)

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 in areas of congregational and personal stewardship. (www.stewardshipoflife.org)

[ELCA Stewardship Resources](#)— Our denomination’s deep well of materials. (elca.org/stewardship)

[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.

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