

Your Stewardship Toolkit for December 2019!

*December's theme: **Your perfect Christmas gift***

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Check out myblog: 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!

The resources of this kit are most effective when used to support a monthly emphasis about a different aspect of stewardship. Exploring the theme, “Your perfect Christmas gift,” you could use the newsletter article, snippets and resource links below to plan bible studies, temple talks, a preaching series and other activities.

Here’s what you’ll find:

-Stewardship Snippets: Put a monthly themed “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 to jump start your stewardship ministry!

Stewardship Snippets

Copy and paste into your bulletin!

Source: Rob Blezard.

Stewardship Snippet

December 1, 2019 (First Sunday of Advent, Year A)

Matthew 24:42—Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.

Consumer culture tells us to buy and spend so that we may have the perfect holiday. Jesus, on the other hand, reminds us to pay attention because he is coming. We are called to be alert and ready, focusing on all that really matters.

Stewardship Snippet

December 8, 2019 (Second Sunday of Advent, Year A)

Romans 15:13 – May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Let Paul's words be your call not only to find joy and hope, but also to share it with the world – especially those for whom the season brings sadness. That is good stewardship of your Christmas cheer!

Stewardship Snippet

December 15, 2019 (Third Sunday of Advent, Year A)

James 5:8 – You must also be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.

Patience is good stewardship! We know that Jesus is coming, not only in our celebration of Christmas, but also in the “kin-dom” of God both now and forever.

Stewardship Snippet

December 21, 2019 (Fourth Sunday of Advent, Year A)

Matthew 1:20b – An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

The story of Joseph's dream reminds us that God's plans sometimes require us to depart from what we know and expect. As followers of Jesus, may we be able to find the courage and flexibility to be good stewards of all God's amazing gifts.

Stewardship Snippet

December 24, 2019 (Nativity of the Lord, Year A)

Luke 2:19 –But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.

The Messiah is born, so let us celebrate! Long after the presents have been opened and the decorations packed away, the amazing gift of Jesus remains. Let us ponder the story in our hearts and share this very good news wherever we go.

December 29, 2019 (First Sunday of Christmas, Year A)

Matthew 2:13 –Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.”

How soon after the joy of Christmas comes this story of terror and grief. Thankfully, Joseph pays attention and changes the family’s plans accordingly. May we, like Joseph, listen for God as we steward the good news of Jesus in new ways and different directions.

Newsletter article

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DECEMBER 2019

Your perfect Christmas gift?

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God. -Ephesians 2:8a

True confessions: I’ve never worn that jaunty Christmas tie my son bought me five years ago. At the end of every December I shake my head and say, well, maybe next year. It’s a waste, I know.

Most of us have a few Christmas presents, given in love and received with joy, that are forlornly collecting dust in a drawer or closet. That’s not very good stewardship, is it?

More important than that forgotten bottle of perfume or homely sweater, how are you stewarding that most precious of all Christmas gifts—the new life you have through faith in Jesus? Do you cherish it, honor it, make the most of all it has to offer? Because it is truly amazing.

New life. Too many Christians focus exclusively on the AFTERlife that begins when we die. But that’s missing out on the joy, peace and fulfillment that Jesus promises us today, what he describes as life abundant. You’ve doubtless seen evidence of this life in the cheerful eyes and peaceful smiles of holy people you’ve encountered. Light and love and joy radiates from them.

I want that life. Don’t you?

The abundant life is Jesus’ free gift, but it doesn’t come automatically. It grows with us as we mature in faith through prayer, scripture study, worship, service and generosity – the disciplines of faith. In so doing, we align our hearts and souls with God’s purposes and fulfill ever more closely those two holy commandments to love God and neighbor.

This year, don’t let your faith end up like a jaunty Christmas tie, hanging unused in the closet. Make the most of it and live into the new, abundant life Jesus promises to us all. It’s the number one stewardship lesson.

--Rob Blezard

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Links to resources

The “think it” resource

[When ‘Decemberism’ crucifies Christmas](https://sojo.net/articles/when-decemberism-crucifies-christmas) – The culture’s answer to Christmas is “Decemberism,” a month of consumer excess that values human beings exclusively on their ability to contribute or participate economically, says the Rev. Brian Konkol, writing in *Sojourners*. “Decemberism is the predominant religious tradition of the so-called ‘holiday shopping season,’ and the significance of Christmas is consistently crucified as a result.”

(<https://sojo.net/articles/when-decemberism-crucifies-christmas>)

The “teach it” resource

[Jesus – the best gift ever](https://www.group.com/childrens-ministry/blog/sunday-school/object-lesson-jesus-is-the-best-gift-ever/) – From Group, the experts in youth and family ministry, comes this simple Sunday school exercise to help children visualize why Jesus is the best gift ever. It’s a thoughtful complement to the more traditional Christmas lessons and activities.

(<https://www.group.com/childrens-ministry/blog/sunday-school/object-lesson-jesus-is-the-best-gift-ever/>)

The “do it” resource

[Christmas Discipleship for Families](https://www.crosswalk.com/family/parenting/kids/12-ways-of-christmas-for-family-discipleship.html) – It’s all too easy to lose focus on Christ even though we’re supposed to be celebrating his birth. This season can bring both stresses and joys, and it also can bring many opportunities for family discipleship. From Crosswalk.com, here are some ideas for your family to celebrate Christmas discipleship.

(<https://www.crosswalk.com/family/parenting/kids/12-ways-of-christmas-for-family-discipleship.html>)

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

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

[Center for Steward Leadership](http://www.luthersem.edu/stewardship/) – Luther Seminary’s excellent website. (www.luthersem.edu/stewardship/)

[The ELCA Foundation](http://www.elca.org/give/elca-foundation) a ministry of our denomination. (www.elca.org/give/elca-foundation)

[Lower Susquehanna Synod Stewardship](http://lss-elca.org/stewardship) – Selected free or low-cost resources. (lss-elca.org/stewardship)

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