

Your Stewardship Toolkit for February 2020!

February's theme: **Steward your life: Cultivate a heart of love**



Rev. Rob Blezard, Assistant to the Bishop

Lower Susquehanna Synod

rblezard@lss-elca.org

I'll send you the free Toolkit directly to your inbox every month. [Just drop me an email.](#)

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

The resources of this Toolkit are most effective when used to support a monthly emphasis about a different aspect of stewardship. Exploring the theme, "Steward your life: Cultivate a heart of love," 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

February 2, 2020 (Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany, Year A)

Matthew 5:9 –Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Stewarding and nourishing a heart of love helps us to live out Jesus' teaching in the Beatitudes. As children of God we strive for peace, justice, and dignity for all God's beloved creation. In Christ, we are called to love.

Stewardship Snippet

February 2, 2020 (Presentation of the Lord, Year A)

Hebrews 2:18 –Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.

It can be tough to cultivate and steward a heart of love! Do not be discouraged as you seek to love more fully and radically. Jesus understands and knows the human heart. He suffered for love and was tested, and he will help us learn the hard, beautiful work of love.

Stewardship Snippet

February 9, 2020 (Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany, Year A)

Matthew 5:16 –In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

"Love in your heart wasn't put there to stay - Love isn't love 'til you give it away!" These lyrics from The Sound of Music remind us not to cling to the love God cultivates in our hearts. Let your love shine and shimmer as you reflect the light and love of Christ to a weary and hurting world.

Stewardship Snippet

February 16, 2020 (Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany, Year A)

Matthew 5:23-24 –So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister....

Stewarding and tending a heart of love may lead us to difficult choices and actions. Jesus reminds us to pay attention to love, reconciliation, and mending relationships first; everything else will follow.

February 23, 2020(Transfiguration Sunday, Year A)

Matthew 17:5 –While he [Peter] was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!" *Peter, James, and John see Jesus shining like the sun, his form transfigured into a dazzling presence—and they are terrified. As they are, we're still listening and following Jesus today to cultivate a heart of love.*

Newsletter article

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FEBRUARY 2020

Steward your life: Cultivate a heart of love

Jesus taught, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven.” –Matthew 5:43-45a

Red hearts, flowers and chocolates remind us that February is the uncontested month of love.

It’s excellent (and easy) to love those close to us, but Jesus tells us to go wider, deeper, riskier – to love even our enemies. In so doing, Jesus says, we become children of God.

This challenges us to embrace love as the key discipline and develop a heart so full of love that it flows to even our enemies. Isn’t that how we’re supposed to live as disciples? It’s just good stewardship of our lives.

For this “month of love,” practice loving your enemies.

The effort is especially timely in our season of discord, when our loudest voices encourage us – through name-calling, denigrating, lying, smearing – to hate those with whom we disagree. Even calling them “enemies” is too much (they’re really neighbors!).

Loving our “enemies” doesn’t mean we agree with them or tolerate bad behavior. It means respecting, listening, discussing, refraining from anger and revenge. Here are some ideas for loving our enemies:

- Jesus gives us the first step: Pray! For them and for you!
- Stop seeing them as enemies. They’re our neighbors whom God loves.
- Resist hate, the very thing our culture encourages.
- Treat everyone as you would want to be treated.
- Lastly, keep praying.

By embracing love as a spiritual discipline, we cultivate a heart of love that opens our lives to the transformation Jesus dearly desires for us -- to be children of God. Now that’s good stewardship.

--Rob Blezard

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Links to resources

The “think it” resource

[Loving your enemies](#) – Here are some great thoughts from a man who had lots of enemies: Martin Luther King, Jr. It’s actually a sermon delivered at his church in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1957, just as he was gaining national fame, King’s commentary on Jesus’ teaching speaks prophetically to his life -- and ours!

(<https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/publications/knock-midnight-inspiration-great-sermons-reverend-martin-luther-king-jr-2>)

The “teach it” resource

[Love for enemies: Bible study of Matthew 5:43-47](#) – Challenge yourself or your Bible study group with these insightful observations and ideas about Jesus’ teaching. From Tim MacBride, Lecturer in New Testament & Preaching, Morling College, Sydney, Australia.

(<https://coffeewiththeking.org/2016/01/25/matt5-9/>)

The “do it” resource

[How to love your enemies](#) – Here is some excellent thinking from the Rev. James Martin, S.J., author of *Jesus: A Pilgrimage*. The Jesuit Father’s essay challenges us not only to look seriously at what Jesus means in his call for us to love our enemies, but also to actually practice it.

(https://www.huffpost.com/entry/how-to-love-your-enemies_b_841538)

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. (www.elca.org/stewardship)

[Center for Stewardship Leaders](#) – Luther Seminary’s excellent website. (faithlead.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. (lss-elca.org/stewardship)

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