

Your Stewardship Toolkit for May 2020!

May's theme: **Will COVID-19 help us become better stewards?**

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If you want the free Toolkit sent 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, “Will COVID-19 help us be better stewards?” 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 in the Toolkit:

-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. Use it for a temple talk or group discussion.
- **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 the Rev. Sharron Blezard, ELCA pastor, spiritual director and writer for the Stewardship of Life Institute.

-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.

May 3, 2020 (Fourth Sunday of Easter)

Acts 2:46-47a - Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. *Now is a good time to take our cues from the early church, and choose new/ancient ways of being in community together for the sake of the world. How would you like to see this “new normal” unfold?*

May 10, 2020 (Fifth Sunday of Easter)

1 Peter 2:9 - But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. *We have a long way to go to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, AND we have a special part to play. Peter reminds us that we belong to God and are called to proclaim the good news and work for justice, peace, and mercy.*

May 17, 2020 (Sixth Sunday of Easter)

John 14:15 - “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”

Jesus connects love to action in today’s gospel. Loving Jesus means loving God and neighbor and following the way of Christ. And as we do, the Spirit of truth guides us and helps us be better stewards of God’s abundance.

May 24, 2020 (Seventh Sunday of Easter)

John 17:11 – [Jesus prayed,] “And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.”

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many of our neighbors—medical personnel, first responders, police, and grocery workers and many others—selflessly put their lives on the line to serve and protect us. As our world recovers, how might we ALL “be one” as stewards of the common good to protect people and God’s creation?

May 31, 2020 (Day of Pentecost)

1 Corinthians 12:13 - For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

A “new normal” emerging from the COVID-19 crisis might resemble the early Church. Imagine one unified body, all people welcome and affirmed, with the Holy Spirit activating our faith and equipping us to be better stewards of all God’s gifts.

Newsletter article

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MAY 2020

Will COVID-19 help us become better stewards?

Toilet paper. Seriously. Will we ever take lowly “TP” for granted again?

Toilet paper is just one of the countless everyday blessings that the pain of COVID-19 has taught us to savor – along with worshiping beside loved ones, going to work, getting paid, shopping, going to the movies, and on and on. (What’s on your list?)

Pain teaches us, focuses us, molds us. Pain strips away pretensions and defenses. Pain shows us what’s real, what’s true, what’s valuable. Pain cleanses our spirit and draws us closer to God.

Easter reminds us that our faith journey is all about death and rebirth. Explaining baptism in *The Small Catechism*, Martin Luther taught that baptism’s waters must *daily* drown our old sinful self, so that *daily* we may be born anew. As we walk in God’s sanctifying light, parts of us should be dying *daily* and being reborn.

Pain? It serves as midwife in our death and rebirth.

And COVID-19 has given us pain aplenty, far beyond the shortage of bathroom supplies. Many have lost loved ones, jobs, security, healthcare, homes, retirement, wellbeing and relationships.

Pain will be long with us as we slowly inch back towards normalcy. But “normal” will probably look much different than what we’ve known. A “new normal” is already emerging. Do you sense it? That the pandemic has changed you? Us? Forever?

With the Holy Spirit’s help, may COVID-19’s pain prune from our lives what needs to die in order for us to be reborn as God’s people in this “new normal.” May the “new normal” find us better stewards of our lives -- less greedy, less self-focused, less preoccupied with silly things, and more centered in Christ, more loving to our neighbor, more generous, more hopeful and more tolerant.

--**Rob Blezard**

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Links to resources

The “think it” resource

[The coronavirus pandemic is exposing the myth of self-reliance](https://www.christiancentury.org/article/opinion/coronavirus-pandemic-exposing-myth-self-reliance) – Our way of life in North America has encouraged us to take so much for granted, including the people whose lives, jobs and very existence we really need. “A gift of this pandemic is that we can no longer make each other invisible,” writes Angela Denker, Lutheran pastor and journalist, in *The Christian Century*. “Now we are asked to sacrifice for one another. We need Easter more than ever, and we are stuck in a Lent where sometimes it seems like no one wants to carry their cross.”

(<https://www.christiancentury.org/article/opinion/coronavirus-pandemic-exposing-myth-self-reliance>)

The “teach it” resource

[Top Bible Verses about Pain](https://www.patheos.com/blogs/christiancrier/2015/07/15/top-7-bible-verses-about-pain/) – Check out writer Jack Wellman’s selections from Scripture that talk about pain and the transformation it brings. Great for Bible study or group discussion: What do the passages say to you? How do they apply to your life? Do you agree with Wellman’s commentary? What would be YOUR top Bible passages about pain?

(<https://www.patheos.com/blogs/christiancrier/2015/07/15/top-7-bible-verses-about-pain/>)

The “do it” resource

[20 prayers to pray during this pandemic](https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2020/march-web-only/covid-19-coronavirus-20-prayers-to-pray-during-pandemic.html) – “The crisis is urgent, and I feel powerless. But perhaps feeling small is the best reminder to pray. Prayer is how we actively practice believing, so simply, so confidently, that God has the whole world in his hands,” writes Jen Pollock Michel in *Christianity Today*. She goes on to suggest prayers that can help us focus on God’s power to heal, help and renew.

(<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2020/march-web-only/covid-19-coronavirus-20-prayers-to-pray-during-pandemic.html>)

The “preach it” resource

[Weekly Lectionary Stewardship Reflection](http://www.stewardshipoflife.org). Sharron Bleazard, 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://www.elca.org/stewardship) – Our denomination’s deep well of materials. (www.elca.org/stewardship)

[Center for Stewardship Leaders](http://faithlead.luthersem.edu/stewardship/) – Luther Seminary’s excellent website. (faithlead.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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