

Your Stewardship Toolkit for July 2020!

June's theme: We the people: Steward our Democracy

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If you want the free Toolkit sent directly to your inbox every month, [just drop me an email](#).

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 this month's theme, "We the People: Steward our democracy," you might not only share the newsletter article and snippets, but also use the resource links below to plan Bible studies, temple talks, a preaching series or other activities.

Here's what you'll find in the Toolkit:

-Stewardship Snippets: Cut and paste a monthly themed "Stewardship Snippet" in every Sunday bulletin! It's a quote from the week's Revised Common Lectionary lessons, followed by a brief reflection.

-Newsletter Article: Cut and paste an article on stewardship every month in your newsletter.

-Links to Resources: You'll find links to resources on the Web:

- **The "think it" resource** – Get your mind turning and your soul fired up.
- **The "teach it" resource** – Help your folks to wrestle with some of stewardship's implications.
- **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.

July 5, 2020 (Fifth Sunday after Pentecost, Proper 9)

Jesus taught, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." –Matthew 11:28-29

The hard work of democracy, ensuring that all citizens have voice and a place, can be wearying. We aren't alone in our efforts as allies and advocates of those who have been excluded. Jesus goes with us, shouldering the burden and helping to form beloved community.

July 12, 2020 (Sixth Sunday after Pentecost, Proper 10)

If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you. –Romans 8:11

Stewarding our civic freedoms and responsibilities is hard, holy work that seems bigger than our meager resources and knowledge. But God's very Spirit dwells in us, equips us, goads us, and moves our hearts and feet toward justice for all.

July 19, 2020 (Seventh Sunday after Pentecost, Proper 11)

We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. – Romans 8:22-23

Is the world about to turn? Look at what's happening. God is leading us toward the reign of Christ, where the scales of justice will balance, where every beloved child of God has voice and place, and all of creation breaks free of the sin that binds us.

July 26, 2020 (Eighth Sunday after Pentecost, Proper 12)

Jesus told them another parable, "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened." – Matthew 13:33

Bread-baking enjoyed renewed popularity during the COVID-19 pandemic, so much so that yeast is in short supply. Thankfully, it takes only a little dab of yeast to leaven an entire loaf of bread. Likewise, a little bit of Jesus in our lives encourages us to pursue freedom and justice for all people.

July 2020 Newsletter article

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We the People: Steward our democracy

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.

Two sentences from the Declaration of Independence express the true hierarchy that orders our lives. At the top is God, our creator. Human beings are next, and we create government to secure our rights. So, the hierarchy is: God, people, government.

This marks a dramatic innovation in Western thought. For centuries monarchs had been understood to rule “by divine right,” so the accepted hierarchy was: God, monarchy (government), people.

We celebrate the Declaration’s signing day, July 4, 1776, with fireworks, family cookouts and parades. This year’s Fourth of July comes in the wake of Covid-19 and protests over the death George Floyd -- events that have brought to light many deep-seated problems.

Amid economic instability, rising inequality in wealth and healthcare, disparities in criminal justice and other issues, many are asking, “Who does the government *really* serve?” The Declaration reminds us that we’re in charge, and we have the power to make changes to direct the path our government is on.

It would be wise for God’s people to mark the Fourth of July, 2020, with deep reflection and renewed commitment to working to ensure a government that reflects our values and serves all of God’s people.

Why is this a stewardship issue? Christian stewardship is the discipline of taking care of and using wisely all that God has given us – whether it be money, health, relationships, or even governments. God has entrusted us with a vibrant democracy. It’s up to us to take care of it.

--Rob Blezard

Copyright © 2020, Rev. Robert Blezard. Pastor Blezard serves as an assistant to the bishop of the Lower Susquehanna Synod, ELCA, and works as content editor for www.stewardshipoflife.org. He blogs at www.thestewardshipguy.com

Links to resources

Two “think it” resources

[Government and Civic Engagement: Discipleship in a Democracy](#) -- The ELCA is preparing a social message on politics and faith to guide its members on the responsibilities and challenges of being active politics. This *draft* of the statement offers excellent biblical and theological reasoning for how and why Christians should get involved. A thoughtful read!

(https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/SocMsgOnGov_Draft4PublicComment.pdf)

[Reclaiming Public Faith from the Religious Right](#) – Okay, so that’s a pretty provocative title, but the article in Duke Divinity’s *Faith & Leadership* challenges all Christians, regardless of our politics, to consider our civic responsibilities in light of the gospel. It’s a 2019 interview with Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, author and leader of the “new monastic” movement, on the occasion of the publication of his book, *Revolution of Values: Reclaiming Public Faith for the Common Good* (InterVarsity Press, 2019).

(<https://faithandleadership.com/jonathan-wilson-hartgrove-reclaiming-public-faith-religious-right/>)

Two “teach it” resources

[Discuss Politics in Your Small Group](#) – Leaders know it’s always risky to talk about politics in church, especially in today’s divisive atmosphere, yet Christians need to discuss important issues of the day. This resource from LiveWay offers guidance on how small groups can talk about political issues constructively.

(<https://groupministry.lifeway.com/2019/07/15/6-ways-to-discuss-politics-in-your-small-group/>)

[What the Bible Really Says about Politics](#) -- Politics are polarizing because the different opinions about the role of government and application of laws run such a wide—and impassioned—spectrum of beliefs and philosophy. But the Bible isn’t silent on the issues either. *Relevant* magazine looks at five things God wants us to remember about government.

(<https://relevantmagazine.com/current16/what-bible-really-says-about-politics/>)

The “do it” resource

[Creating Change Together: A Toolkit for Faithful Civic Engagement](#) – What does it mean to be a publicly engaged church? The United Methodist Church has put together a wonderful resource explaining why and how to engage in civic affairs. Look it over and see how and where you and your congregation can raise your voice in the democratic process.

(<https://www.umcjustice.org/news-and-stories/creating-change-together-801>)

The “preach it” resource

[Weekly Lectionary Stewardship Reflection](#). 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](#)– 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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