

# Your Stewardship Toolkit for August 2020!

*June's theme: Steward Our Future Church*

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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, "Steward Our Future Church," 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.*

**August 2, 2020** (Ninth Sunday after Pentecost Proper 13)

*When [Jesus] went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. -*

**–Matthew 14:14**

Compassion and mercy. Wherever he goes, Jesus shows compassion and mercy, especially for the most vulnerable. As we steward our congregation into the future, how can compassion and mercy be a guiding principle for us and our church to help connect with our community and neighbors?

**August 9, 2020** (Tenth Sunday after Pentecost Proper 14)

*But when the disciples saw him [Jesus] walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying “It is a ghost!” And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, “Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.” –Matthew 14:26-27*

Even though COVID-19 has changed so much in our world, our communities, and our houses of worship, we must guard against fear and take heart because Jesus is with us. We will never be left adrift; Jesus is with us in these uncharted waters.

**August 16, 2020** (Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost, Proper 15)

*“It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles.” – Matthew 15:11*

As we steward the church into a new future, let’s remember Jesus’ words to the disciples. It’s not so much about razor-edge adherence to law and strictures, but rather how one lives the life of faith. An authentic and faithful witness is needed for these difficult and shifting times.

**August 23, 2020** (Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost, Proper 16)

*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect. – Romans 12:2*

The early Christians did not conform to the world’s standards, and they were known for their love, care, and genuine open community. Let us work to make sure that the future church is not conformed to the culture but rather is faithful to the radical upside-down-inside-out way of Christ.

**August 30, 2020** (Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost, Proper 17)

*Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. – Romans 12:21*

The future church must be a beacon of good, casting a true vision of hope, love, justice, and mercy as we commit to follow Jesus into a new way of being and living. Today’s gospel lesson reminds us that we must lose our life to find it in Jesus (Matthew 15:21-28). What do you and your faith community need to do to become that beacon in an uncertain world?

## **August 2020 Newsletter article**

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AUGUST 2020

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## **Steward our future church**

For clarifying our thoughts and helping us to reset priorities, there's nothing like a crisis – whether it's a job layoff, a death in the family, social upheaval or a health emergency.

With Covid-19 we've witnessed plenty of all of these, and more! Despite our natural resistance to change, we're learning new ways to live. *As a disciple of Christ*, what thoughts have clarified for you? *As a follower of Jesus*, what personal priorities have you reset?

The questions arise because you are the church, we are the church together and stewards of the church. We will pray the Holy Spirit will guide us to a "new normal" of holy living as both disciples and community that will be different – and better – than what we've known.

What might that look like? Here are some questions to pray over and discuss:

- When your church suspended in-person worship, what ways did you find to stay connected to God? To one another? What did this teach you about holy living? About being church together?
- Covid-19 forced us to "be church" without buildings. What has this revealed about the nature of community? About the value of buildings? As we go back into our buildings, how can things be different? Why must they be?
- In light of what we've learned, what values, ideas, traditions, habits should we let go of? Which should we keep? What really matters? And why?
- How can your insights, strengths and gifts help to shape the future of your life as a disciple and follower of Jesus? Of your congregation? What can you give to the future church in time, talent and treasure?

Covid-19's crises are still teaching us. As stewards of God's church, we can renew and restructure our church to fulfill God's mission. With God's guidance, we will.

--**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](http://www.stewardshipoflife.org). He blogs at [www.thestewardshipguy.com](http://www.thestewardshipguy.com)

## Links to resources

### The “think it” resource

[\*\*The Gospel in a Time of Social Distancing\*\*](https://www.newyorker.com/news/on-religion/the-gospel-in-a-time-of-social-distancing) – Covid-19 has challenged churches to understand what it means to be a community of God in a time when people can’t gather in the same way that they have for centuries. For Casey Cep, staff writer for *The New Yorker*, the experience is helping congregations to take stock for today and directions for the future.

(<https://www.newyorker.com/news/on-religion/the-gospel-in-a-time-of-social-distancing>)

### The “teach it” resource

[\*\*Positive Trends, Social Realities and the Future of the Post-Covid-19 Church\*\*](https://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/10304/positive-trends-social-realities-and-the-future-of-the-post-covid-19-church) – Our culture is changing so rapidly that it’s hard to keep up. Writing in MinistryMatters, Thomas Bandy explains some of the most important trends that are confronting our congregations today. Discuss and learn together: How is this trend evidenced in our community? What do we need to know? What are the implications for God’s ministry? How can we as God’s people adapt? How do we preach and live the Good News in this time?

(<https://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/10304/positive-trends-social-realities-and-the-future-of-the-post-covid-19-church>)

### The “do it” resource

[\*\*How and Why the Future Church Can Thrive\*\*](https://careynieuwhof.com/how-and-why-the-future-church-can-thrive/) – What are the practices that can help put ourselves and our churches in the best position to face the future with hope, courage and vigor? Church consultant Carey Nieuwhof provides some engaging ideas. Which ones would work for you and your congregation?

(<https://careynieuwhof.com/how-and-why-the-future-church-can-thrive/>)

### The “preach it” resource

[\*\*Weekly Lectionary Stewardship Reflection\*\*](http://www.stewardshipoflife.org). Sharron Blezard, Lutheran pastor, spiritual director, writer and child of God, looks at stewardship implications in the week’s Revised Common Lectionary lessons.

([www.stewardshipoflife.org](http://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](http://www.stewardshipoflife.org))

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

[\*\*Center for Stewardship Leaders\*\*](http://faithlead.luthersem.edu/stewardship/) – Luther Seminary’s excellent website. ([faithlead.luthersem.edu/stewardship/](http://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](http://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](http://lss-elca.org/stewardship))

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