

Your Stewardship Toolkit for September 2020!

September's theme: Stewarding the Common Good

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



Happy Birthday! *September 2020 marks the beginning of the fifth year of the Stewardship Toolkit! It's been quite a journey. Thank you for making it a part of your stewardship ministry. Got a comment, suggestion, criticism? [Drop me a line!](#)*

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, "Stewarding the Common Good," 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 "learn 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.

September 6, 2020 (14th Sunday after Pentecost, Proper 18)

Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law. - Romans 13:10

Striving to keep the twin commandments to love God with all our being and love our neighbors as ourselves, we naturally care for the common good. We learn that what affects one really affects us all.

September 13, 2020 (15th Sunday after Pentecost, Proper 19)

We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. – Romans 14:26-27

What is the common good? For Christians, it is expressed in the reign, or way, of Christ. We are accountable to God for how we treat one another; how we reflect the love of Christ through both our words and our actions.

September 20, 2020 (16th Sunday after Pentecost, Proper 19)

“Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous? So the last will be first, and first will be last.” – Matthew 20:15-16

In this parable Jesus reminds us that it is God's nature to be generous and that God has special concern for the poor and marginalized. We often assume that everyone gets what we deserve by the strength of our own will and bootstraps. God has other ideas and loves all people.

September 27, 2020 (17th Sunday after Pentecost, Proper 20)

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. – Philippians 2:3-4

When we consider the interests of others something beautiful happens: Our own interests seem less important, our wants fewer, and relationships flourish. Only by aligning our wills and lives with Christ may we grow into the fullness of life God desires and intends for us.

September 2020 Newsletter article

Select the article below, or one of about four dozen in the [Toolkit Newsletter Article Archive](#). Reprint permission is granted for local congregational use. Just copy and paste into your newsletter! Please include the copyright notice. Other uses please inquire: rblezard@lss-elca.org.

Stewarding the Common Good

Jesus taught, *“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”* –**Matthew 22:38**

In Genesis 4, God asks Cain the whereabouts of Abel, his little brother whom Cain has just murdered in a jealous fit. Answering God’s question, Cain snarkily retorts, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” The correct answer for Cain is, “Yes, you are your brother’s keeper.” And the principle applies to us, too.

Woven through Scripture is God’s clear priority that we love and care for one another. The imperative finds clearest expression in the life and words of Jesus, who repeatedly teaches us to love everyone – friend, family, neighbor – even enemy. *No exceptions.*

Love for neighbor is a stewardship issue because we are responsible to care for all that God has entrusted to us, including community, relationships, and the welfare of others. Stewarding the common good is an essential component.

As North Americans, we haven’t done a very good job of stewarding the common good because our culture teaches us to “look out for number one,” as opposed to looking out for everyone. Consider how much of our political division and brokenness in criminal justice, education, healthcare, economics and government results from our thinking “what’s good for me,” rather than “what’s good for everybody.”

Stewarding the common good often involves giving up some measure of what would be good just for us. We sacrifice out of love to provide what is good for our neighbor. Is anything more Christian?

This year, especially as politics and division has embroiled and divided our country, study how the theme of loving our neighbor and stewarding the common good is woven through Scripture. What does it mean for you and the church? Think. Pray. Act.

--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

[Martin Luther on the Purpose of Vocation](https://www.peacelc.ca/blog/working-for-our-neighbor-martin-luther-on-the-purpose-of-vocation/) – In this excerpt from his book, *Working for Our Neighbor*, Gene Veith, discusses the Reformer’s views of Christian freedom and our fulfillment through caring for our neighbor. How are you living it? Your congregation?

(<https://www.peacelc.ca/blog/working-for-our-neighbor-martin-luther-on-the-purpose-of-vocation/>)

[Catechism Commentary: The Common Good](https://catholicmoralthology.com/catechism-commentary-the-common-good/) – “The notion of ‘the common good’ may be the most familiar concept of Catholic social teaching,” and one that undergirds the whole body of teaching, writes theology professor David Cloutier in his wonderful essay that explores the what is meant by the common good, whose responsibility it is, and what actually serves it. What can you learn from it?

(<https://catholicmoralthology.com/catechism-commentary-the-common-good/>)

The “learn it” resource

[Living in the Spirit and in the Body for the Common Good](https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/living-in-the-spirit-and-in-the-body-for-the-common-good/) – In this resource John Piper examines 1 Corinthians 12:1-13 and its implications for Christian living. The passage challenges many of our cultural assumptions about priorities and living. Good for individual devotion or group study.

(<https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/living-in-the-spirit-and-in-the-body-for-the-common-good/>)

Two “do it” resources

[The Paradox of Civility](https://blogs.elca.org/advocacy/the-paradox-of-civility/) – One way we can begin to work for the common good is to pledge ways to listen respectfully and debate civilly with those with whom we disagree. In this essay, Peter Severson, a public policy advocate for the Rocky Mountain Synod of the ELCA, talks about the [Golden Rule 2020](#) campaign and how Christians can take the lead on civil dialogue.

(<https://blogs.elca.org/advocacy/the-paradox-of-civility/>)

[7 Ways to Love Your Neighbor as Yourself](https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/spiritual-life/7-ways-to-love-your-neighbor-as-yourself.html) – The “second greatest” command to love our neighbor is familiar to most Christians, but do we really know what it actually means? And, could it be, that we actually love some of our neighbors differently than we love ourselves? This essay from Crosswalk.com explores.

(<https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/spiritual-life/7-ways-to-love-your-neighbor-as-yourself.html>)

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)

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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