

# Your Stewardship Toolkit for December 2020!

December's theme: God equips us for 'new things'

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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, "God equips us for 'new things'," your congregation 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:

**-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 URLs to resources on the Web to help you explore this month's theme.

**-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.*

**December 6, 2020** (Second Sunday of Advent, Year B)

*"A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." --Isaiah 40:3*

2020 has certainly upended our worship and community life. Christmas will be much different from what we've known. As faithful stewards, we prepare to welcome Jesus, even if circumstances are not what we expect or desire. Remember: God is faithful and Christ is with us.

**December 13, 2020** (Third Sunday of Advent, Year B)

*"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him."-- John 1:6-7*

Like John, we are sent as witnesses to testify to the Christ at work in the world. In addition to preparing

our own hearts and minds in Advent, faithful stewards know that the Spirit gives us the power to share the good news of God among us.

**December 20, 2020** (Fourth Sunday of Advent, Year B)

*“For nothing will be impossible with God.”– Luke 1:37*

This Sunday we celebrate Mary’s faithfulness and willingness to do God’s will. This brave young woman hears the angel’s words and believes. As a faithful steward, what possibilities do you see for our community and congregation?

**December 24, 2020** (Nativity of the Lord, Proper 1, Year B)

*“But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.” – Luke 2:19*

It’s easy to get caught up in our treasured aspects of Christmas and still miss out on the wonder and awe of the story that changed the world. This year listen to the story with fresh ears and see new possibilities. Steward these mysteries as Mary did, by treasuring them and pondering what they mean for you.

**December 27, 2020** (First Sunday after Christmas Day, Year B)

*“I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. – Isaiah 61:10*

What’s the appropriate response to Christmas? Joy and praise, of course! This week’s lessons brim with both. This Christmas season steward not only your resources but also your joy and praise for the One who changed everything.

## **December 2020 newsletter article**

Select the article below, or one of more than 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: [editor@stewardshipoflife.org](mailto:editor@stewardshipoflife.org).

### **God equips us for ‘new things’**

*“I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.”–Isaiah 43:19*

Advent and Christmas are all about celebrating that most amazing “new thing” God brought about for our sake – incarnating God’s divine essence in the human form of Jesus, our Savior and Lord.

We prayerfully ask at the beginning of every church year, “To what ‘new things’ is God calling us?” But this Advent the question holds special significance.

With its racial unrest, political divisiveness, riots, wildfires, hurricanes and COVID-19 pandemic, 2020 will be remembered as one of the most troubled years in recent history. And everybody is bracing for a “new normal” that is still unknown.

The pandemic has caused us to cancel many of our cherished Advent and Christmas observances. We pray the Holy Spirit will give us the creativity and wisdom to find new ways faithfully to steward the mystery of the incarnation and tell God’s story.

More broadly, we also pray for guidance to steward our lives that we may be, as Jesus directed, the salt of the earth and light to a world that needs us more than ever.

As we listen for God’s direction, preparing us for “new things,” the four traditional Advent themes may offer a path. We cultivate these themes in our hearts and congregations and share them with the world:

- **Hope** as an antidote to the culture of despair.
- **Peace** in our hearts to bring to an angry world.
- **Love** for our friends and enemies alike.
- **Joy** in Christ, who makes all things new.

God, who promises to make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert, will prepare us and equip us to do “new things” to steward our lives and congregations to meet the challenges ahead.

*-Rob Blezard*

*Copyright © 2020, Rev. Robert Blezard. Pastor Blezard serves as pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church, Aberdeen, MD, 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

[Advent and Christmas in the midst of COVID-19](#) – It’s the season of singing favorite Christmas carols and enjoying friends and family. But this season all the gifts from past years may feel like shadows of the past. The United Methodist Church offers some suggestions on helping communities of faith celebrate the season.

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/articles/advent-and-christmas-music-in-the-midst-of-covid-19>

[Healthy ways to resolve conflict at church or work](https://careynieuwhof.com/7-healthy-ways-resolve-conflict/) – Change, even productive change that God is pointing you toward, often involves conflict. No change satisfies everybody, and there's usually at least a few people who are furious, but conflict need not break the congregation. Church consultant Carey Nieuwhof offers these tips for handling conflict constructively.

<https://careynieuwhof.com/7-healthy-ways-resolve-conflict/>

[How adaptive leadership can help churches embrace mission](https://www.faithward.org/how-adaptive-leadership-can-help-churches-embrace-mission-in-uncharted-territory/) – This insightful interview with Tod Bolsinger, author of *Canoeing the Mountains*, brings understanding to how leadership can navigate the uncharted waters facing our churches. From Faithward.com.

<https://www.faithward.org/how-adaptive-leadership-can-help-churches-embrace-mission-in-uncharted-territory/>

[Steps to help your church change before they need to](https://www.christianitytoday.com/karl-vaters/2016/may/7-steps-church-change-before-they-know-they-need-to.html) – Christianity Today's columnist Karl Vaters suggests that, by paying close attention to what's happening in the congregation, wise church leaders can anticipate problems and take action before things reach a crisis point.

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/karl-vaters/2016/may/7-steps-church-change-before-they-know-they-need-to.html>

[Leadership qualities of a post-Covid-19 church](https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2020/august/10-leadership-qualities-of-post-covid-19-church.html) – Months into the pandemic, it's now clear that many things that are changing will remain changed. So, we have a choice. We can either lament the losses that we've encountered, or we can navigate forward, by faith, into a new chapter of our God-given mission. Christianity Today weighs in.

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2020/august/10-leadership-qualities-of-post-covid-19-church.html>

[50 Bible verses on listening to God](https://bible.knowing-jesus.com/topics/Listening-To-God) – What new thing is God leading us towards? Well, if you're not listening to God it's pretty hard to know. Study, teach, learn, meditate on what Scripture says about listening to God.

<https://bible.knowing-jesus.com/topics/Listening-To-God>

## **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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