

Your Stewardship Toolkit for February 2021!

February's theme: Love Your Neighbor

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

Feel free to forward it to colleagues who might find it useful.

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, "Love Your Neighbor," 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.

February 7, 2021 (Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany, Year B)

"He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless." – Isaiah 40:29

Yes, loving one's neighbors can be difficult, but it is not impossible. God is with us and gives the strength and power we need to love others, even our enemies. Stewardship of relationships matters!

February 14, 2021 (Transfiguration Sunday, Year B)

"For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake." – 2 Corinthians 4:5

Like the Apostle Paul, we sometimes need to remind ourselves and others that what we do as disciples isn't about us but about the crucified and risen Christ. Following Jesus makes us responsible toward and accountable to both God and neighbor.

February 17, 2021 (Ash Wednesday, Year B)

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal." – **Matthew 6:19-20**

Our lessons for Ash Wednesday remind us that love is the currency in which God deals. Storing up earthly treasures at the expense of our own wellbeing and that of our neighbors is not faithful stewardship. Followers of Jesus are called to greater love of God and neighbor.

February 21, 2021 (First Sunday in Lent, Year B)

"All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his decrees." – **Psalms 25:10**

God's commandments and Jesus' teachings are not optional for Christians; they are given for the purpose of our growth in Christ. In turn we share Christ's love with our neighbors and steward carefully all of God's good gifts.

February 28, 2021 (Second Sunday in Lent, Year B)

"For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it." – **Mark 8:35**

Jesus is pretty clear that we are not to spend our time on earth amassing stuff and seeking to extend our lives and capital but rather to give ourselves away in grateful response to the gospel. Saving one's life is about loving and giving instead of fortifying one's own status and economic condition.

February 2021 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.

Love Your Neighbor

Jesus said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." –Matthew 22:37-40

What a shame that February – the one month of the year with keen focus on love – is also the shortest. We sure could use a lot more love in our world, especially for our neighbor.

The last 12 months have been particularly hard, as race riots, a divisive election and civil unrest have all unfolded against the traumatic backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic. Currently in very short supply, more love for neighbor would go a long way in helping us to solve our problems.

Love for neighbor is integral to not only good discipleship, but also good stewardship. The greater the "love for neighbor" factor in our lives, the better stewards we will be of every blessing God provides – creation, time, relationships, money, possessions, health, to name just a few. By cultivating love for neighbor we will also enjoy a happier life and promote a healthier and more civil society.

The opposite is also true. Cultivating enmity for neighbor leaves us sour, selfish and cynical, while also making our nation angry and selfish.

This year make February "Love Your Neighbor" month in your personal devotions and your congregational life. Give the concept breathing room in your life. Keep it in your thoughts, sow it in our heart, talk about it to your family and friends.

Pray for God to teach you what it means to love our neighbor. Pray for God to give you the strength and will to live it. And watch as love heals and invigorates your life ... and our world.

-Rob Blezard

Copyright © 2021, Rev. Robert Blezard. Pastor Blezard serves as pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church, Aberdeen, MD, and works as content editor for www.stewardshipoflife.org. He blogs at www.thestewardshipguy.com.

Links to resources

[Pope Francis on 'Love Our Neighbor'](http://www.popefrancishomilies.com/love-our-neighbour) – One of our age's most prophetic voices has preached extensively on what it means to love our neighbor. This search page from the Vatican website provides a wide sampling of Pope Francis' thoughts on the matter. (Note that the results are in chronological order, so his most recent thoughts are at the end.)

(<http://www.popefrancishomilies.com/love-our-neighbour>)

[So, What Does it Mean to Love Your Neighbor?](https://www.christianitytoday.com/derwin-gray/2015/january/so-what-does-it-mean-to-love-your-neighbor.html) – Jesus was quoting Leviticus when he gave us the second-greatest commandment (Matthew 22:26-39). In his insightful blog for ChristianityToday, Pastor Derwin Gray looks back to Leviticus and explores the social-justice implications for us in today's world. (<https://www.christianitytoday.com/derwin-gray/2015/january/so-what-does-it-mean-to-love-your-neighbor.html>)

[What Does It Mean to Love Your Neighbor as Yourself](https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/spiritual-life/what-does-it-mean-to-love-your-neighbor-as-yourself.html) – This fine article from Crosswalk.com lists 10 simple, bible-based ways that we can live Jesus' command in our daily lives.

(<https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/spiritual-life/what-does-it-mean-to-love-your-neighbor-as-yourself.html>)

[Kedoshim – Love Your Neighbor As Yourself](https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/kedoshim-love-your-neighbor-as-yourself/) – Here's an interesting commentary on the subject from a Jewish perspective. Writing in the Times of Israel, American Rabbi Steven Morgen explores how the concept of neighbor love is a key to a holy life.

(<https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/kedoshim-love-your-neighbor-as-yourself/>)

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)

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