**Here’s Your Stewardship ‘Toolkit’ for January 2018!**

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Good, thoughtful, consistent communication, education and action will help develop a healthy culture of stewardship and generosity in your congregation. This kit is designed to help get you there!

Here’s what you’ll find below:

[**-Stewardship Snippets**](#Snippets)**:** Put a “Stewardship Snippet” every week in your Sunday bulletin! It’s a quote from the week’s Revised Common Lectionary lessons, followed by a brief reflection. Just cut and paste!

[**-Newsletter Articles**](#Newsletter_Articles)**:** Publish something in your newsletter every month on money and faith, or post it on your website. Keep your people thinking about stewardship. Just cut and paste!

[**-Links to Resources**](#Links_to_Resources)**:** You’ll find links to resources on the Web:

**-The “think it” resource** – Something thoughtful and insightful to get your mind turning and your soul fired up. Share it with your leadership, or use it for a temple talk.

**-The “teach it” resource** – Your folks ought to prayerfully and faithfully wrestle with some of stewardship’s biblical, theological and discipleship issues.

**-The “do it” resource** – Talk, as they say, is cheap, so put your stewardship efforts into high gear.

**-The “preach it” resource** – Check out the weekly Lectionary Reflection written by Lower Susquehanna Synod pastor and synod staff person Sharron Blezard.

[**-General Resource Websites**](#Links_to_Resources): – These are places you can go for great ideas!

[**-Consultation and Coaching**](#Consultation): – Did you know there are experts willing to meet with your congregation?

**Stewardship Snippets**

*Copy and paste into your bulletin!
Source: Rob Blezard*

***Stewardship Snippet***

**January 7, 2018** (Baptism of the Lord)

**Genesis 1:1-2:** “In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.”

*Where do we come from? For that matter, where did anything come from? These first two verses of the whole Bible remind us that God created all that was, all that is, and all that will be. God made it all, even us, and everything belongs to God. That’s the first rule of stewardship.*

***Stewardship Snippet***

**January 14, 2018** (2ndSunday after the Epiphany)

**1 Samuel 3:10** –Now the LORD came and stood there, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

*God calls us all – all of us, without exception. The question is, are we paying attention, able to hear God’s voice amid the clamoring din of the world’s many competing voices. In order to be a good steward, servant, or disciple, we have to be paying attention so that when God calls us we can reply, as Samuel did, “Speak, for your servant is listening!”*

***Stewardship Snippet***

**January 21, 2018** (3rd Sunday after the Epiphany)

**Mark 1:17-18 –**And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." And immediately Simon and Andrew left their nets and followed him.”

*What is you here for, and how what are you doing? Those ARE the questions for steward disciples. When Jesus invites Simon and Andrew to follow him, pursue a life of purpose and strength and “fish for people,” they drop their nets and go. What nets do you need to drop to follow Jesus’ invitation?*

***Stewardship Snippet***

**January 28, 2018** (4th Sunday after the Epiphany)

**Psalm 111:1 –**Praise the LORD! I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart!

*What can we do to open the way for God to transform us into more-faithful steward disciples? Praise and thanksgiving are key! As you go through your day, keep these two phrases in your heart and on your lips: “Praise be to God!” “Thanks be to God!” Think of them and say them often. Then see what God can do with you.*

**Newsletter article**

*Just copy and paste into your newsletter!*

*Source: Rob Blezard, Lower Susquehanna Synod*

Stewardship 101

**2018: Your Year of Gratitude**

Think of the three happiest people you know – people whose lives effervesce with joy and peace. Chances are they also have a profound thankfulness for all that God has blessed them with. They also seem to live with a sense of contentment. Reflect for a minute. Isn’t that the case?

By contrast, you may also know folks who are considered wealthy but are profoundly UNhappy. Likely they not only fail to exude thankfulness for their wealth, but they also mistakenly believe they need even MORE possessions to be happy. Isn’t that right?

Now, which kind of person do you tend to be?

Thankfulness. Happiness. Contentment. These joyful characteristics work together, reinforcing one another. Human experience proves this simple fact to be true: People who are grateful for all they have and all they are tend to be happy and content. Moreover, don’t they also tend to possess spiritual depth and emotional maturity? A coincidence? Hardly.

Thankfulness, happiness and contentment interact, but gratitude holds the key. Develop gratitude, then happiness and contentment follow. It doesn’t work the other way around. With prayer, devotion and simple exercises, the Holy Spirit will lead you to deeper spiritual maturity and more happiness. Here are some ideas for you and your family.

* **Pray daily.** Ask God to give you a greater sense of thankfulness. And then thank God for all the day’s blessings.
* **Chart thankfulness.** On a big wall calendar mark one thing for which you’re thankful to God. Invite other family members to do the same. When you get in the habit of looking for them, you will find blessings everywhere.
* **Keep a “blessing list.”** Write down the things you are grateful for. Then as you say your nighttime and morning devotions, pray over the list: “God, I’m thankful for *this*, and I’m thankful for *that*.” Revise the list as needed.
* **Start a refrigerator “gratitude board.”** Using sticky notes, post on your refrigerator the things for which you are most grateful. Use a different color sticky note for each family member. Keep the board updated.
* **Send out thank-you notes.** Buy a box of inexpensive thank you notes and send one every week. Go deep, thanking not only the folks who have given you a present or done a favor for you, but also those whose love, support, friendship, laughter, energy or presence are important to you.
* **Make a “thank offering.”** Express gratitude in a tangible way by making a contribution to your congregation or favorite church cause. Make the donation “just because,” or in honor or memory of a loved one, or on the occasion of a special event or blessing in your life.

Adopt one or more of these exercises as a spiritual discipline and, with God’s help, you will develop the attitude of gratitude that will bring more satisfaction, greater happiness, spiritual depth and emotional maturity to your life. Blessings for 2018.

*--Rob Blezard*

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**Links to resources**

**The “think it” resource**

[**Stewardship: More than Just Giving Away Money**](http://www.christianitytoday.com/biblestudies/articles/churchhomeleadership/accountablegod.html)**:** “Stewardship is another way of talking about ministry, and it would revolutionize ministry if people could think of it in terms of stewardship—that we are accountable to God for what we do and with what he has trusted to us,” says R. Paul Stevens in this Christianity Today interview. How would this paradigm shift revolutionize your ministry?

**The “teach it” resource**

[**Stewardship Basics Discussion Starters**](http://www.anglican.ca/gifts/resources/sfl/qds/)**:** In our hyper-consumeristic North America we can’t teach enough about faith and money. We are bombarded by messages about money — not only from advertising, but also from media, friends, families, and so on. Church is often about the only place folks don’t hear about money. From the Anglican Church of Canada here is a series of simple class outlines you can use in just about any setting -- Sunday school, temple talks, workshops, adult Christian education, meeting devotions.

**The “do it” resource**

[**A Manual for Year-Round Stewardship**](https://stewardsheart.weebly.com/uploads/4/1/3/6/41363933/a_manual_for_year_round_stewardship.pdf): Everybody knows the best stewardship efforts take place 365 days a year, and this manual is designed to help congregational leaders to formulate a vision for year-round stewardship and create a plan for implementing it. Edited by now-retired ELCA Stewardship leader Eugene Grimm, the manual gathers together some of the best resources of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

**The “preach it” resource**

[**Preaching Stewardship: Confessions of a Convert**](http://www.luthersem.edu/stewardship/default.aspx?m=6667&post=4981): – If you’re hesitant to talk about money in the pulpit, you’re definitely not alone. It’s a big taboo in a lot of congregations, and many preachers avoid it like the plague. In this insightful article David Lose, the noted author, speaker and scholar, describes the lessons that transformed him into a fan of talking about finances in church.

[**Weekly Lectionary Stewardship Reflection**](http://www.stewardshipoflife.org) – Sharron Blezard, Lower Susquehanna Synod assistant to the bishop and pastor, takes a look at stewardship implications in the week’s Revised Common Lectionary lessons.

**General Stewardship Resource Websites**

[**Stewardship of Life Institute**](http://www.stewardshipoflife.org/)– Headquartered at United Lutheran Seminary, this site has a trove of resources on stewardship in areas of congregational finance, individual finance, discipleship, education, preaching, creation care, and more.

[**Center for Steward Leadership**](https://www.luthersem.edu/stewardship/) – Luther Seminary’s excellent website with lots of resources.

[**The ELCA Foundation**](https://www.elca.org/give/elca-foundation) has resources at its website, as well as consultants who can meet with your congregational leaders to develop ideas and plans for long-term financial stability.

[**Lower Susquehanna Synod Stewardship**](http://www.lss-elca.org/resources/stewardship/) – You’ll find a selected group of great resources.

**Consultation and coaching**

If your congregation is looking for direction, we have experts who are ready to help. We can provide guidance by telephone or email, in one-on-one meetings, in workshops and seminars for your team. Give us a call. We’re here to help.

The Rev. Rob Blezard, Assistant to the Bishop
rblezard@lss-elca.org

717-652-1852, Ext. 109
Pastor Blezard specializes in stewardship development for congregations. He can assist in communication, education, programming and planning.

The Rev. Elizabeth Polanzke, Central Pennsylvania Gift Planner, ELCA Foundation

717-654-2334

Elizabeth.Polanzke@elca.org.

Pastor Polanzke specializes in helping with legacy gifts, estate planning, endowment funds and other planned-gift topics.

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