

Here's Your Stewardship 'Toolkit' for June 2018!

This month's theme: Stewardship of Our Bodies

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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!

This month's newsletter article and resources center on *Stewardship of Our Bodies*. Why not adopt the theme in your church by promoting fitness, nutritious eating and healthy living? You can hold workshops and classes, temple talks and discussions. Ask health-care professionals to assist.

Here's what you'll find below:

-Stewardship 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: Publish something in your newsletter every month on stewardship and faith, or post it on your website. Keep your people thinking about stewardship. Just cut and paste!

-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 action.

-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: – These are places you can go for great ideas!

Stewardship Snippets

Copy and paste into your bulletin!

Source: Rob Blezard

Stewardship Snippet

June 3, 2018 (2nd Sunday after Pentecost, Year B)

Deuteronomy 5:12 – Observe the Sabbath day and keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. *Do you need a break? In today's nonstop, 24/7 world, we need Deuteronomy's reminder that God actually commands us to stop working one day a week. Sabbath literally means "stop." Good stewards maintain a good work/life balance. What would a "Holy stoppage" look like for you?*

June 10, 2018 (3rd Sunday after Pentecost, Year B)

Mark 3:21 – When his [Jesus'] family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, 'He has gone out of his mind.'

Do people always understand your passionate decision to follow Jesus -- to turn your back on the world's hatred, its consumerism, its warmongering and its xenophobia? It can seem downright crazy to others, but the path of steward/discipleship leads out of our comfort zone – and the world's – and into God's Realm.

June 17, 2018 (4th Sunday after Pentecost, Year B)

Mark 4:26, 27 – Jesus also said, "The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how."

How does God work in our lives, to draw us close as steward/disciples and then send us out to accomplish holy things? Jesus explains that it's like seed growing and spouting in us in ways that we can't explain. What seeds of steward/discipleship are taking root in you?

June 24, 2018 (5th Sunday after Pentecost, Year B)

Psalms 107:1 – O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever.

Thankfulness is a gateway response for steward/disciples because gratitude leads us to see our blessings in terms of abundance rather than scarcity. When we see our blessings as abundance, we can let go of them and share with our needy neighbors. So give thanks always!

Newsletter article

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Stewardship of our physical health

The Apostle Paul writes, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own?" **2 Corinthians 6:19**

To be a steward/disciple is to be aware of all the gifts God has entrusted to you, and then to care for them and use them wisely for God's purposes. This month we focus on our bodies. God has given each of us a physical body that, like an automobile, is a complex vehicle that carries us along our road of life. To live the fullest life possible, like our cars, we need to take good care of our bodies.

Evidence suggests that we in the United States have significant room for improvement. The World Health Organization ranks the United States 31st for life expectancy on a ranking of 188 nations. And we are higher in our rates of cancer, obesity, diabetes, heart disease and other chronic medical conditions than many other developed nations.

Of course, everybody gets sick sometimes, and many of us suffer from health problems that have nothing to do with how well we are taking care of ourselves. Genetics play an important role in our health, as do environment and other factors.

With so many variables over which we have *no control*, it's important that we do our best with the variables we *can* control.

For June, dedicate yourselves to being a better steward of your body. Even if you are in generally good health now, you can always improve. Here are some ideas:

- **Get a physical.** Once your doctor has checked your cholesterol, blood sugar, blood pressure, body-mass index and other important markers of health, she can help set priorities and make a plan.
- **Move it!** Studies show that even small amounts of exercise improve health and wellbeing. Ask your doctor how much exercise is safe for you to start – or how fast you can ramp up.
- **Go on a diet.** The dreaded “D” word. Fact is, our eating habits comprise our diet; the only question is whether it's leading us to better or worse health. Learn about the nutritional value of the foods you now eat, and explore choices that are more healthful. Ask your doctor for recommendations.
- **Stop smoking.** It's the number one preventable health risk. Smoking is linked to cancers, high blood pressure, heart disease and other problems.
- **Sleep.** Doctors say getting eight hours of shuteye does wonders for body and mind.
- **Pray and meditate.** Spiritual disciplines lower your stress, which improves physical health, too.

God gave us wonderful bodies to carry us through our life's journey of discipleship. The better we care for it, the more fruitful our journey will be.

--*Rob Blezard*

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Links to resources

The “think it” resource

[Weight of the Nation](#): It seems as if every week brings new revelations about our nation's growing obesity problem, and with it a rising tide of chronic health-related problems, such as diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, high blood pressure and others. This classic HBO documentary series explores the reasons behind the epidemic whose causes are complex and involve public food policy, consumer choice and emotions.

The “teach it” resource

[Eat Healthy, Be Active Community Workshops:](#) Lead your people in discovering better health through diet and exercise. This series of six workshops, each 60 minutes, will help. Great program from health.gov, the series comes with videos, leader guide and materials for every segment. (<https://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/workshops/>)

The “do it” resource

[Live Better by Keeping Sabbath:](#) It's not only a good idea to take a full day off from work and enter into sacred time, it's also a commandment -- one of God's Top Ten! Yet one survey showed only 10 percent of pastors keep it, so one can only imagine how many everyday Christians observe it. *Guideposts* magazine offers these five suggestions for keeping the Sabbath! (<https://www.guideposts.org/better-living/health-and-wellness/living-longer-living-better/how-to-balance-your-life-keep-the>)

The “preach it” resource

[Weekly Lectionary Stewardship Reflection](#) – Sharron Blezard, Lower Susquehanna Synod assistant to the bishop and pastor, looks at stewardship implications in the week’s Revised Common Lectionary lessons. (www.stewardshipoflife.org)

General Stewardship Resource Websites

[Stewardship of Life Institute](#)– 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. (www.stewardshipoflife.org)

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

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

[Lower Susquehanna Synod Stewardship](#) – You’ll find a selected group of great free or low-cost resources. (www.lss-elca.org/faith-formation/stewardship/)

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