

# Your Stewardship Toolkit for December 2018!

This month's theme: **Stewardship for Advent & Christmas**

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

You can use the resources of this kit by themselves to educate and encourage stewardship, but they would be more effective as a monthly emphasis about a different aspect of stewardship. You could plan bible studies, temple talks, a preaching series and other activities.

This month's emphasis is **Stewardship for Christmas & Advent** .

Future emphases are:

**January:** Stewardship of Time

**February:** Stewardship of Loving Relationships

**March:** Stewardship in Lent

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 Article:** 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**

**Dec. 2, 2018** (1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent, Year C)

**Psalm 25:4** – Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long.

*The First Sunday of Advent's theme is hope. Christians find our hope in God. We hunger for God and ask for guidance and strength to live fully as steward/disciples.*

### ***Stewardship Snippet***

**Dec. 9, 2018** (2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent, Year C)

**Philippians 1:9-11** – And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

*Love is the theme for the Second Sunday in Advent. When we cultivate love in our lives as steward/disciples, it does overflow and guide our lives on the paths of strength and joy.*

### ***Stewardship Snippet***

**Dec. 16, 2018** (3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent, Year C)

**Philippians 4:4** – Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.

*Joy is the theme for the third Sunday of Advent. Philippians reminds us to rejoice – find the joy – in God. Always! Though we live in a world that has many troubles, we can always find joy, in God's love. Joy is a way of life for steward/disciples.*

### ***Stewardship Snippet***

**Dec. 23, 2018** (4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent, Year C)

**Micah 5:4** – And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; and he shall be the one of peace.

*Peace is the theme for the fourth Sunday of Advent. We remember that Jesus is, as Micah says, "the one of peace," the shepherd who cares for us, his flock. Steward/disciples draw near to Jesus and find peace in him.*

### ***Stewardship Snippet***

**Dec. 24, 2018** (Nativity of Our Lord, Year C)

**Titus 2:11, 12** – For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly.

*It requires some readjustment to live fully as steward/disciples. Through Jesus we find strength. As we more fully turn to Jesus, our eyes clear, our minds brighten, and we find it easier to turn from worldly desires and values to the joy and simplicity of life in Christ.*

**Dec. 30, 2018** (1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Christmas, Year C)

**Colossians 3:12, 14** – As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

*We all know that stewardship is about how we live so that we love God thoroughly and our neighbor as ourselves. This remarkable passage gives us a vivid image to help us get there. Wake each day and clothe ourselves in Christian character and love.*

## Newsletter article

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## ***Stewardship for Advent and Christmas***

Many of us cherish everything about the Christmas season -- except those incessant advertisements telling us to buy this and by that. We ask, "Where's Jesus in all this commercialism?"

This is the right question. Though it asks us to examine every aspect of our lives, stewardship particularly challenges us to question the role money plays in our personal lives and our culture.

Christmas presents are wonderful expressions of love that makes both giver and recipient feel good. At the same time, we want to be wary of advertising's lure to make us overspend, or to think that the cost of our gift is proportionate to our love.

Most of all, we need to be sure that the main point of our Christmas is not the gifts *we give*, but the gift *we receive* from God – Jesus. Here are some ideas:

- Challenge yourself to spend less for presents this year. Set a budget and stick to it.
- Attend worship regularly in Advent and Christmas.
- Give some handmade presents: A scarf or hat, a photo album, a batch of fudge, a card, a poem.
- Prayerfully read Advent daily devotions (Richard Rohr's *Preparing for Christmas* is amazing!).
- Give your time: a concert together, a shared meal, a day at a museum, a walk in the woods
- Use an Advent calendar to help you remember all that God has given you.
- Give service: wash a loved one's car, help clean the garage, paint a room, babysit for an evening.
- Play Christmas music that has religious themes (More "Silent Night," less "Frosty the Snowman.")
- Instead of buying a present, make a donation to a charitable organization in honor of your loved one (or check out ELCA Good Gifts!).
- Make a generous year-end contribution to your congregation.

Our thoughtful practices for Advent and Christmas not only make for good stewardship of our time, talents, relationships and money, they also help us to draw near to Our Lord and experience God's greatest gift to us.

--Rob Blezard

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## Links to resources

### The “think it” resource

[Take the Commercialism Out of Christmas.](https://blog.franciscanmedia.org/franciscan-spirit/take-the-commercialism-out-of-christmas) The influence that money and gift-buying have gained over Christmas has led one advocacy group to sarcastically dub the holiday “Consumas.” It’s a parallel holiday, complete with its own traditions. This essay from the Catholic publication *Franciscan Spirit* explores the phenomenon. Great reading!

(<https://blog.franciscanmedia.org/franciscan-spirit/take-the-commercialism-out-of-christmas>)

### The “teach it” resource

[Advent and Christmas Bible Studies.](https://www.elca.org/Resources/Bible-Studies) Get more out of worship this Advent and Christmas by looking at the standard readings that our churches follow in the Revised Common Lectionary. The ELCA offers Bible studies for every church season in the Lectionary’s three-year cycle. For this year, download the studies for Advent and Christmas Year C. Use them in class or personal study ahead of worship.

(<https://www.elca.org/Resources/Bible-Studies>)

### The “do it” resource

[Simply Christmas: Sustainable ways to observe, cherish the season.](https://www.livinglutheran.org/2015/11/simple-christmas/) How can you find more joy in Christmas while at the same time spending less money? This article from *LivingLutheran* has some good tips – and links to resources to help you get there.

(<https://www.livinglutheran.org/2015/11/simple-christmas/>)

### The “preach it” resource

[Weekly Lectionary Stewardship Reflection.](http://www.stewardshipoflife.org) 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](http://www.stewardshipoflife.org))

## General Stewardship Resource Websites

[ELCA Stewardship Resources](http://elca.org/stewardship)– Our denomination’s deep well of materials. ([elca.org/stewardship](http://elca.org/stewardship))

[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))

[Center for Steward Leadership](http://www.luthersem.edu/stewardship/) – Luther Seminary’s excellent website. ([www.luthersem.edu/stewardship/](http://www.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://www.lss-elca.org/faith-formation/stewardship/) – Select free or low-cost resources. ([www.lss-elca.org/faith-formation/stewardship/](http://www.lss-elca.org/faith-formation/stewardship/))

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