**Here’s Your Stewardship ‘Toolbox’ for April 2018!**

Rev. Rob Blezard, Web Editor

www.stewardshipoflife.org

rob@stewardshipoflife.org

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 stewardship 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 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**](#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***

**April 1, 2018** (Easter Sunday, Year B)

**Acts 10:39-40a** **–** We are witnesses to all that Jesus did, both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day.

*Jesus the Christ’s death and resurrection reveal to us the depth and fullness of God’s love and mercy. We ascribe to God all that we have and all that we are, but so much more! We can claim God’s favor and love in our lives.*

***Stewardship Snippet***

**April 8, 2018** (2nd Sunday in Easter, Year B)

**Acts 4:34-35** –There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

*The earliest church presents a vision of perfect community stewardship. When everyone shares, no one is needy. What does this passage reveal about how God wants us to handle our worldly goods? How can you/we step in that direction?*

***Stewardship Snippet***

**April 15, 2018** (3rd Sunday in Easter, Year B)

**1 John 3:1a** – See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are.

*Our identity – who we really are – forms the hub of our lives as steward-disciples. Our actions and thoughts revolve around that hub. And John reveals that we are children of God almighty. When you understand and live, really live, as a child of God, everything else falls into place.*

***Stewardship Snippet***

**April 22, 2018** (4th Sunday in Easter, Year B)

**Psalm 23:1 –**The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.

*You’ve read and prayed this before, but the passage’s power is only increased by repetition. Stewards believe in God’s abundance and learn the difference between needs and wants. When God fills our needs, we want for nothing.*

***Stewardship Snippet***

**April 29, 2018** (4th Sunday in Easter, Year B)

**I John 4:7 –** Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

*Steward-disciples know that God intends us to live in community, helping and relying on one another. We are stewards of community when we practice love for one another. What does that mean for you? How can we love people we may not like?*

**Newsletter article**

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*Source: Rob Blezard, Lower Susquehanna Synod*

***Thank God for our food***

*God said [to Adam and Eve], ‘See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food.* **-Genesis 1:29**

There’s an old joke about the first-grade teacher who asks her class, “Where do apples come from?” Little Jenny speaks up: “From the supermarket!”

We laugh, but the sad truth is that many of us are so far removed from farms that we forget that our food -- every bite -- comes from life, life that God alone created. Yes, farmers sow seeds and care for the plants and trees, but it’s God’s miracle of life that makes them grow.

As stewards and disciples, we desire to cultivate in ourselves and our communities a deep appreciation for all God provides us, particularly what we need to live. With every mouthful at every meal we thank God for our daily bread, and for the soil, air and water that sustains life.

Easter and springtime are perfect occasions to celebrate God’s miracle of life that gives us fruit, vegetables, grains, meat, fish and dairy foods. Here are some ideas:

* In saying mealtime grace, thank God not only for food, but also for the cycles of seedtime, growth and harvest. Thank God for life-nourishing soil, water and air.
* While eating discuss or ponder the origins of the variety of food on your plate. How and where are the plants grown or animals raised? How do they get to your kitchen?
* As a church or family, celebrate Earth Day (Sunday, April 22) by learning about food production and how climate change, pollution and economics impact our food supply.
* Celebrate Earth Day by planting a garden in your yard or community garden on church grounds.
* Learn about nutrition -- what foods are the best and worst for us, and why. Promote healthy eating.
* Learn about food waste in our culture and take steps to reduce it in your home.
* At church, reserve a Sunday for a special service highlighting creation and food. Maybe “Blessing of the Seeds,” or the ancient “Rogation Sunday” ritual.

We live in a culture where food is all around us all the time. As steward-disciples, we want to be sure not to take even a mouthful for granted.

*--Rob Blezard*

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**Links to resources**

**The “think it” resource**

[**FAQ on Food Waste**](https://www.usda.gov/oce/foodwaste/faqs.htm): Did you know that up to 40 percent of food produced in our nation is wasted every year, according to US Department of Agriculture estimates. That’s incredibly bad stewardship! Think of all the hungry people that food could feed? This FAQ offers a great overview of the problem and how we all can help! What can you do in your home or church? (www.usda.gov/oce/foodwaste/faqs.htm)

**The “teach it” resource**

[**Awakening to God’s Call to Earthkeeping**](http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Awakening_To_Gods_Call_To_Earthkeeping.pdf): This ELCA resource is perfect for teaching and leading about environmental issues. It’s 50 pages packed with ideas, studies, and important information to share with your congregation, your study group or family. How can your family or congregation help?
(<http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Awakening_To_Gods_Call_To_Earthkeeping.pdf>)

**The “do it” resource**

[**Earth Sunday Ideas and Resources**](http://www.stewardshipoflife.org/2018/03/earth-sunday-ideas-and-resources/): Earth Day, April 22, falls on a Sunday this year, so why not Celebrate Earth Sunday that day? Make it a celebration of the natural environment. Or maybe hold a blessing of seeds and soil, or perhaps an old-fashioned “Rogation Services.” Here are some places to get ideas and resources. (www.stewardshipoflife.org/2018/03/earth-sunday-ideas-and-resources/)

**The “preach it” resource**

[**Creation-Justice Lectionary Commentary**](http://www.lutheransrestoringcreation.org/): The grassroots organization, Lutherans Restoring Creation, offer weekly sermon helps to provide tips and ideas for working into your preaching some themes of creation care and the environment. Something for every Sunday. (www.lutheransrestoringcreation.org/)

[**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**

[**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. (www.stewardshipoflife.org)

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

[**The ELCA Foundation**](https://www.elca.org/give/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**](http://www.lss-elca.org/resources/stewardship/) – You’ll find a selected group of great free or low-cost resources. (www.lss-elca.org/faith-formation/stewardship/)