**Your Stewardship Toolkit for February 2024!**

*February’s theme:* **Valentine’s Day/Ash Wednesday Mashup**

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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:**](#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:**](#Newsletter_Article) Cut and paste an article on stewardship every month in your newsletter.

[**-General Resource Websites**:](#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 4, 2024** (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 11, 2024** (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 14, 2024** (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 18, 2024** (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.”* **– Psalm 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 25, 2024** (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 2024 newsletter article** (325 words)

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**Valentine’s Day/Ash Wednesday Mashup**

Because Valentine’s Day and Ash Wednesday fall on the same day this year, February 14 gives us a real clash of messages!

As stewards of both our personal lives and our greater world, what can we make of a day that, on the one hand says sweetly, “I love you,” and on the other hand says sternly, “Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return”? How should we observe a day with such disjointed messages?

Putting them together, we can come up with some interesting responses.

Ash Wednesday tells us that our lives are finite and fleeting, a truth woven throughout the Bible. Psalm 103:15 says our lives are like the grass that flourishes and then is gone. Ash Wednesday also reminds us that we are in the hands of the creator God who decreed that our earthly lives begin and end in dust.

And although our culture revels in romantic love, the Bible gives us a wider vision of love that we can aspire to: love through care and concern for the world, for creation and those around us.

Putting the two messages together, we know there is no delaying our call to love our neighbors as ourselves (Mark 12:31) and to provide for the least among us (Matthew 25:31-46).

With wars raging in Ukraine and Gaza, refugee crises across the globe and Covid on the rise (to name just a few problems), perhaps this can be the year you can send a “Valentine” someone who needs not only love, but food, medicine, shelter and clothes. Many reputable church charities would gladly use your contribution to help the neediest.

Who are the people in your church and community who need your love and your care? How can you, both individually and congregationally, love and assist them?

The diverse messages of Ash Wednesday and Valentine’s Day give us a prime opportunity to grow in faith, love and discipleship –while there’s time.

*–Rob Blezard*

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**General Stewardship Resource Websites**

[**Stewardship of Life Institute**](https://www.stewardshipoflife.org/)– Headquartered at United Lutheran Seminary, this site has a trove of resources in areas of congregational and personal stewardship. (<https://www.stewardshipoflife.org/>)

[**ELCA Stewardship Resources**](https://elca.org/stewardship)– Our denomination’s deep well of materials. (<https://www.elca.org/stewardship>)

[**Center for Stewardship Leaders**](https://faithlead.luthersem.edu/stewardship/) – Luther Seminary’s excellent website. ([faithlead.luthersem.edu/stewardship/](https://faithlead.luthersem.edu/stewardship/))

[**The ELCA Foundation**](https://www.elca.org/give/elca-foundation) a ministry of our denomination. (<https://www.elca.org/give/elca-foundation>)

[**The Episcopal Network for Stewardship**](https://www.tens.org/) – Lots of good stuff! (https://www.tens.org/)

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