**Your Stewardship Toolkit for October 2023!**

*This month’s message:* **What do we really own?**

**Rev. Rob Blezard, Web Editor**The Stewardship of Life Institute
editor@stewardshipofllife.org

Good, thoughtful, consistent communication, education and action will help your congregation develop a healthy culture of stewardship and generosity. 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 that lifted up a different aspect of stewardship. You could plan bible studies, temple talks, a preaching series, and other activities.

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!
* **Helpful Links:** Explore the issues raised in this month’s newsletter.
* **General Resource Websites:** – These are places you can go for inspiration and great ideas!

**Stewardship Snippets**

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

**October 1, 2023** (18th Sunday after Pentecost, Year A, Proper 21)*Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.* **– Philippians 2:3-4**When we consider the interests of others something beautiful happens: Our own interests seem less important, our wants fewer, and relationships flourish. Only by aligning our wills and lives with Christ may we grow into the fullness of life God desires and intends for us.

**October 8, 2023** (19th Sunday after Pentecost, Year A; Proper 22)

*“Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom.”* **–** **Matthew 21:43**Ouch! Jesus’ words point to the importance of bearing fruit. God promises an abundant harvest with more than enough to share, but we must do our part to cultivate, nurture, and bring to fullness all the bountiful gifts of God, both in our own lives and in the Body of Christ.

**October 15, 2023** (20th Sunday after Pentecost, Year A, Proper 23)

*Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.* **– Philippians 4:6**“Will there be enough?” Many are asking this question in the midst of growing economic uncertainty and fear. Christians know that with God there is always enough. If you’re asking this question, remember Paul’s advice: Don’t worry; give thanks and pray. God will provide a way.

**October 22, 2023** (21st Sunday after Pentecost, Year A, Proper 24)

*“I will give you the treasures of darkness and riches hidden in secret places, so that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, who call you by your name.”* **– Isaiah 45:3**We share God’s abundance through our hands and work, but is still the abundance of God, who loves us and desires good for all creation. How might your hands sharing God’s abundance help point others to Jesus?

**October 29, 2023** (22nd Sunday after Pentecost, Year A, Proper 25)

*“So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us.”* **-** **1 Thessalonians 2:8**Paul, Silas, and Timothy write these words that embody Jesus’ response to the Pharisees in this week’s gospel. How can we reflect the great commandment as steward’s of God’s abundance? What gifts might you bring to share?

**October 25, 2020** (If you observe it as Reformation Sunday)
*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.* **– Psalm 46:1**Even in moments of economic scarcity, we all have something to share from God’s abundance—perhaps a smile or kind word is the blessing someone needs. If you are not in a position to give resources, then by all means give love and compassion.

**Newsletter article**

*Just copy and paste into your newsletter!*

What do we really own?

*‘Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there; the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.’*  **--Job:1:21**

There’s the joke about the nosy neighbor attending a rich woman’s funeral. Peering into the coffin with a friend, he asked, “How much money did she leave?” The friend smiled and replied, “All of it, of course!”

As Job laments, we come into the world naked and leave the same way. We may be dressed in our best clothing on our way out, but we take it to the grave, not the afterlife.

The joke and Job reveal a basic concept of stewardship: We don’t really own anything. We may take possession of it for a period of time, but we eventually leave it for others.

Yet we spend so much of our energy and life accumulating more and more – as if we were going to have it forever, as we were going to live forever. The danger is that absorbed with accumulating wealth, we shortchange the most valuable treasures – loving the Lord our God with all our being and loving our neighbors as ourselves.

That’s why the Bible consistently warns us about wealth. Jesus repeatedly points out the pitfalls. Money and possessions can turn us inward, stunting our growth and preventing us from being the people God created us to be.

Generosity is the preventative cure for this malady. The Bible counsels that tithing – giving away 10 percent of our income – is a good benchmark for faithful giving (although on several occasions Jesus told his disciples to give away ALL their possessions).

Giving 10 percent, or any amount substantial enough to be sacrificial, is a declaration that you are free from the power that money might have over you. Because however much money you can accumulate in life, you will be like the rich woman in the joke: You will leave it all.

*--Rob Blezard*

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[*Click here*](https://thestewardshipguy.com/about-me/) *for a complete and up-to-date bio for Pastor Blezard.*

**Links to resources**

*Going along with the newsletter article on tithing, here are some resources on the topic!*

**The “think it” resource**

[**Carpe Tithem: Tithing Can Invigorate Your Faith**](https://www.elca.org/JLE/Articles/151) -- The vast majority of people in the world cannot even imagine the standard of living that most Americans take for granted. The truth is that we are called to worship God with our wallet as well as our body, mind, spirit and heart. Following are five ways to re-imagine the tithe so that we can see it as an essential expression of the life of faith. (Great article in the *Journal of Lutheran Ethics*.)

**The “teach it” resource**

[**How To Teach Tithing (and why some will resent it)**](http://churchleaders.com/pastors/pastor-articles/244128-teach-people-tithe-will-resent.html)– There’s pushback whenever you teach or try something new at church, even when it’s the right thing to do, and especially when it puts demands on people. So introducing tithing to your congregation takes some careful thought. This article from ChurchLeaders.com argues for a bold approach and gives some tips for following through.

**The “do it” resource**

[**Try-A-Tithe Sunday**](http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Try_A_Tithe_Sunday.pdf) If you’re introducing tithing to your congregation, invite them to take the plunge just for a week — or for one week a month. This handy guide will explain not only how to plan a “Try-a-Tithe Sunday,” but the biblical foundation of tithing. From ELCA Stewardship Resources.

**General Stewardship Resource Websites**

[**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))

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

[**The Episcopal Network for Stewardship**](https://www.tens.org/) – Solid resources! ([www.tens.org/](http://www.tens.org/)).

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